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STORIES

FOR MY CHILDREN



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STORIES FOR MY CHILDREN.



R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS, BREAD STREET HILL.



Front

Eva and the Fairy.

p. 189.

STORIES MY CHILDREN

THE FIRST BOOK OF STORIES FOR CHILDREN

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STORIES

FOR

MY CHILDREN.

BY
E. H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN, M.P.



The Fairy Pool. P. 105



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1869.

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To my Children.

EDWARD, KATE, EVA, AND CECIL,

THESE STORIES ARE DEDICATED

BY

THEIR AFFECTIONATE FATHER,


E. H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN.



PREFACE.

MOST of these Stories were originally told to my children in the pleasant half-hours before the arrival of their bedtime and the sound of the dressing-bell interrupted our evening talk.

In travelling upon a path so often trodden before, it is difficult to avoid the occasional appearance, if not the reality, of plagiarism. I believe, however, that the only tale to which such a suspicion might attach is that of "Ernest," which in some points has a family resemblance to "Alice in Wonderland." My excuse must be that both the general idea of the tale, and the parodies of certain familiar rhymes, were conceived and written by me long before the appearance of that admirable child's book.



The Tales are written as they were told, and if they afford to any other children, in reading, some portion of the pleasure which my own have had in hearing them, I shall not regret having been induced to let them go forth to the Fairy-loving Public.

E. H. KNATCHBULL-HUGESSEN.

October 1869.

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STORIES FOR MY CHILDREN.

PUSS-CAT MEW.

EVERY child knows the sweet nursery rhyme of
"Puss-cat Mew,"—

"Puss-cat Mew jumped over a coal ;
In her best petticoat burnt a great hole ;
Puss-cat Mew shan't have any milk
'Till her best petticoat's mended with silk."

But very few children, or big people either, know *who* Puss-cat Mew was, or what was the history upon which those lines were made. I do not know that I should ever have found it out, only that I happened to overhear the White stable Cat talking to the Brown Kitten that lives in the cottage over the road. I was lying down on the croquet-ground bank, smoking my cigarette, and thinking of the pretty blue sky up at which I was looking, and watching the fleecy white clouds that slowly followed each other over the face of it, and wondering whether it would rain

next day, or be fine and bright enough for Ned's cricket-match, when I heard soft voices talking near me. I raised myself on my elbow to listen, and soon discovered whence they came. The White Cat had got the Brown Kitten into the arbour between the croquet-ground and the kitchen-garden, and, whilst they were watching the young robins which had just been fledged, and plainly expecting that one would hop within reach before long, they were talking over old times and old legends, and the White Cat was telling the whole story about Puss-cat Mew—which by this means I am able to tell to you.

There was, so she said, many years ago a worthy couple who had an only son, to whom they were tenderly attached. The boy grew up strong and hearty, and was withal of a clever turn of mind and a right cheerful disposition. But, somehow or other, he could never fancy his father's trade, which was that of a miller, and was seized with a great desire to see more of the world than he could do by remaining at home. His parents did not appear (so far as the White Cat knew) to have offered any great opposition to his wishes; so, after the usual kissing and crying on the part of his mother, and good advice on the part of the honest old father, our young friend boldly started off on his travels.

He journeyed on merrily enough for a year or more, during which time he had many adventures, but none worth relating, until one day he came to a

large and gloomy forest, in which he hoped to find shade and rest, and possibly some adventures worth telling when he got home again. The first thing, however, which met his eye was a large board nailed against a tree, with an inscription upon it. He walked up, no doubt expecting to see "Trespassers, beware!" written up, or "Whosoever is found trespassing in these woods will be prosecuted according to law," or some other gratifying announcement, such as usually greets the eyes of a weary traveller just as he is proposing to himself a pleasant change from the dusty highway to the soft moss of the shady wood before him.

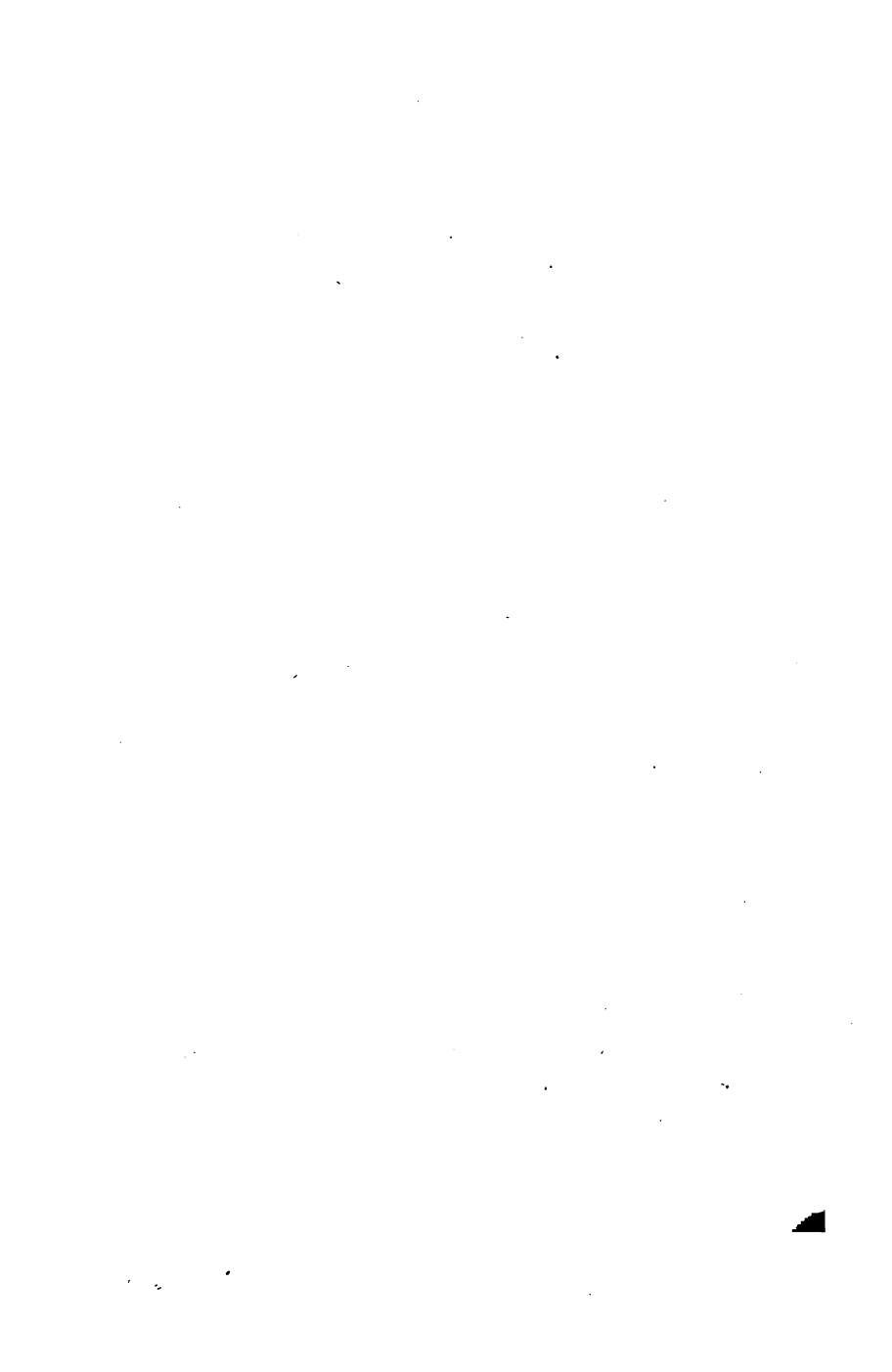
No such words, however, greeted the eyes of *our* traveller. Something much more curious and unusual did he read. This was the inscription :

"Within this wood do Ogres dwell,
And Fairies here abide as well ;
Go back, go back, thou miller's son,
Before thy journey is begun."

"Well," exclaimed the young man, when he had read these words, "this beats cockfighting! How can they know here that I am a miller's son? and how could they have found out that I was coming just to this place, and so have got this board put up all ready? However, if they know as much as this, they might also have known that Joe Brown is not the chap to turn back for a trifle when he has once started. Go back, indeed! Not for Joe! None

of my noble name ever yet knew what fear was, and I am quite resolved that I will never disgrace my family!"

With these brave words on his lips and noble sentiments in his heart, Joe Brown marched forward boldly into the wood, and proceeded for some considerable distance without meeting anything to annoy him in the slightest degree. The turf was soft under his feet, the trees above his head afforded the most welcome shade, and the birds poured forth their sweet melody in a manner which rejoiced his heart, and made him think that he had never heard better music in his life. At last, however, he came to a rather open space, when he saw immediately before him, some thirty or forty yards off, an old dead Oak, with two great branches, with scarce a leaf upon them, spreading out right and left. Almost as soon as he noticed the Tree, he perceived, to his intense surprise, that it was visibly agitated, and trembled all over. Gradually, as he stood stock-still with amazement, this trembling rapidly increased, the bark of the tree appeared to become the skin of a living body, the two dead limbs became the gigantic arms of a man, a head popped up from the trunk, and an enormous Ogre stood before the astonished traveller. Stood, but only for an instant; for, brandishing a stick as big as a young tree, he took a step forward, uttering at the same moment such a tremendous roar as overpowered the singing of all the birds, and made the whole forest re-echo with the awful sound.





Joe Brown and the Ogre.

There was no time for Joe to think of escape, and the difficulty would have been great had he had plenty of time ; but at the very moment of the giant's advance, and before the echo of his roar had died away, a low, sweet voice whispered in the wayfarer's ear, in soothing and reassuring accents, " Stand hard, Joey ;" and he had scarcely time to look down and perceive that the words came from a beautifully-marked Tortoiseshell Cat before he began to find his legs stiffen, his body harden ; and almost before he could say " Jack Robinson " (which, by the way, was an expression he would probably never have thought of), he was turned into a Hawthorn-tree of apparent age and respectability, having a hollow place in its trunk, into which the Cat quietly crept and lay perfectly still.

With another roar, the Ogre made two or three strides forward, taking about ten yards in each stride, and then suddenly pulled up short, and stared around stupidly.

" I saw a Mortal," he growled, in a voice that made the Hawthorn-tree feel as if every berry would fall off him—" I swear I saw a Mortal, but I don't see him now ! It's those bothering Fairies again—I know it is—confound them and their tricks !"

And he stamped so hard on the ground that every mole and rabbit for a mile round felt it ; and, in fact, there was a paragraph in the *Mole Chronicle* next day, stating that the shock of an earthquake had been distinctly felt at that particular time on that very day.

"Spiflicate those Fairies!" again said the Ogre in an angry tone, using the worst word he knew of, which had the great merit of being understood by nobody. "Here have I been waiting in my oak dress for hours to catch a Mortal, and spank my great grandfather if those Fairies haven't sold me again. It is really too bad that this should go on!" And he then moved sulkily off, muttering the well-known "Fe-fi-fo-fum," which is so popular a song among Ogres.

As soon as he was well out of sight, the Tortoise-shell Cat stept purring out of the hole in the Hawthorn-tree, and began to rub herself gently against the trunk. Joe Brown felt his bark again becoming skin, his sap blood, and his branches arms, and in a few moments was again himself. He stretched immediately, yawned and sneezed, to be sure that he was just as he had been before, and having satisfied himself in this respect, turned to thank his friend and deliverer, the Cat. But there was no Cat there. He stood transfixed with amazement. How had she disappeared? Where had she gone to? "And what the dickens was he to do?" He uttered these last words audibly, and had scarcely done so when a voice near him exclaimed—

"Don't say 'dickens,' Joe Brown; it is merely a substitute for a worse word, which your friends in this wood much object to."

And, as he turned round to see who or what had now spoken to him, the same voice, which appeared

to proceed from an old Hornbeam Pollard which stood near, chanted these words in a low but clear voice :

“ Within this forest Ogres dwell,
And Fairies here abide as well :
If these two races could agree,
No chance of life, O man, for thee.
But, though the Ogres of the wood
Eat human flesh, and thirst for blood,
An honest man will ever find
The Fairies friendly to his kind.
In vain the Ogres rage and fume,
And form of trees in fraud assume,
The Fairies watch by night and day
To rob them of expected prey.
And you, poor mortal, only must
To Fairy aid entirely trust ;
For if you on yourself rely,
By Ogre cruelty you'll die.
So if in danger or in doubt,
On Fairies call to help you out,
And, all your scrapes to pull you through,
Call—and at once—for ‘ Puss-cat Mew.’ ”

“ Well, I never,” said Joe, when the voice ceased. And no more he ever had, nor any one else that I ever heard of. And there he stood for a minute, thinking what to do next. It was plainly a place in which there was plenty to be found in the way of adventures, and, of course, it was highly satisfactory to think that there would be always a friend at hand, in the shape of a Fairy, to get you out of any difficulty. On the other hand, he thought it rather beneath him to have to be turned into a tree—or anything else ; for, as far as he could see, he might as well be turned next time

into a thistle, or a fungus, or any other unpleasant thing, and he didn't quite like the idea. Besides, he had only the word of a voice—evidently belonging to a partisan of the Fairies—to tell him that his friends were really the stronger; and from what he had already seen it appeared to him that unless a Fairy was there in the very nick of time, an Ogre of the kind which he had seen might destroy him in a moment before help could come. He thought therefore that, after all, he was better out of the forest than in it, for although he did not desire to shun danger, he was wise enough to know that it is no proof of a brave man to run blindly into it; and he therefore determined to leave the forest, and keep round the outside till he got beyond it on his journey. He then turned round to retrace his steps, when, to his astonishment, he again heard a voice singing to him in these words—

“Of courage we know that Joe Brown has no lack,
Fa de jo dum, fol de rol do ;
He chose to go on when he *might* have gone back,
Fa de jo dum, fol de rol lo.
But his choice it was made when he entered the wood,
Fa de jo dum, fol de rol do,
And he *can't* go back now—don't he wish that he could ?
Fa de jo dum, fol de rol lo.”

“All right,” rejoined Joe, “my name's Easy” (which was an entire falsehood, as we know that it was “Brown”). “If I can't go back, I'll go forward.” And on he marched with a firm step, for he thought this voice seemed to be chaffing him, and he didn't

like to be chaffed by a fellow whom he couldn't even see to chaff back again! So he pushed on for a little way, and then sat down under a fir-tree, and began to eat some bread and cheese which he had brought with him.

As everything seemed perfectly quiet around him, and he experienced no interruption, he began to think that what had happened must really have been a dream, and that, after all, a bold heart and his own right arm were the best things to rely on, and that it was nonsense to suppose that any Fairy could really help him, or that any danger would occur to him from which he could not extricate himself by his own caution and courage. As this thought took full possession of his mind, he could not help finishing it aloud with the remark—

“And as to ‘Puss-cat Mew,’ what good can it possibly be to me to call out such a name as *that* if I was in trouble?”

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when a low sigh reached his ears, and he plainly heard the sound of some creature running away over the dead leaves; but though he turned quickly, he could see no one.

He finished his bread and cheese, and was just thinking of lighting his pipe, when, to his great surprise, he felt a light tap on the shoulder, followed by a cuff on the side of the head, which knocked his wide-awake off, and made his ears tingle for a long time afterwards. Looking up in surprise and rage,

he beheld, close to him, a most decided Ogre. Ten feet or more was he in height—with a fur-cap on his head, a grim and most forbidding countenance, very red nose, eyes bloodshot and set deep in his head, prominent teeth looking uncomfortably sharp, and a chin with a bristly beard, which had evidently not been shaved for a fortnight. Wishing to act upon the plan which he had laid down for himself, and determined not to lose heart, Joe put the best face upon the matter at once,—

“Come,” said he, “leave off, will you? None of that! Hit one of your own size!”

“Fool!” exclaimed the Giant moodily; “a truce to your idle jesting. This is no time or place for it. *You’ve* put your foot in it nicely.”

“I don’t see why,” replied Joe. “I’ve a right to be here as much as any other fellow, and——. Come, I say, you let me go, will you?”

For the other cut his speech short by seizing him, and, in spite of all his struggles, tied his hands and feet with a bit of whipcord which he drew out of his pocket. He then put his finger to his mouth and gave a whistle, which Joe thought was the most fearful sound he ever heard, like seventeen railway trains screeching at the same time as they entered their tunnels. A crunching of sticks followed, as if some heavy animals were approaching, and two Ogres, who could be little less than sixteen or eighteen feet high, came running up, and touched their hats to the Ogre who had captured Joe.

"I've got one, my men," said this monster, who was evidently an Ogre of superior rank ; "and I think he looks young and tender. Carry him up to the castle, and when I come home I'll give orders about him. I shan't want any luncheon to-day, for since I caught those school-children at the picnic the other morning, and rather overate myself with the tender dears, crunch my jawbones if I haven't been off my feed."

Joe Brown now felt exceedingly uncomfortable, but had no means whatever of resisting. The servant Ogres produced a large game-bag, into which they popped the unfortunate young miller ; and there he lay at the bottom of it, along with an old woman and a young girl, both of whom appeared half dead with fright. The old woman would say but little, and was evidently of no friendly disposition, although in like misfortune with the two others. But the young girl was more communicative, and said that she was a teacher in a school not far from the forest, and having joined the children in a picnic a day or two before, had been surprised by the sudden appearance of a terrible Ogre. Those of the children who bore the best characters escaped with comparative ease ; the idle ones were less fortunate, and three, who had neglected to learn their collects the Sunday before, and had fidgeted notably during the whole of the sermon, were instantly devoured before the eyes of their affrighted Teacher. She had made her escape at the time, but as several of her little lambs were

still missing, had ventured into the forest again that day to search for them, and had just been seized by the cruel Ogres. She added, that the old woman was a noted Witch of the neighbourhood, who had done as much harm to mankind as the Ogres, but that it was well known that Witches had no power in any forest in which Ogres and Fairies both lived. The old lady, therefore, having foolishly entered the forest in search of a particular herb of great value, with which she wished to make some magic broth, had been caught by the Ogres, and would certainly find no mercy at their hands. Joe listened with attention, and, in return, told his story to the poor School-teacher.

Thus they wiled away the time until their bearers came to a stop, and taking the game-bags off their shoulders, opened them, and let the captives out. They were in a small room paved with stones, a beam across the top of it, and rows of hooks fastened in the beam, which bore fruit by no means likely to inspire them with hope. A stout farmer, in boots and breeches, quite dead, hung by the chin from one hook, and from his appearance was evidently nearly fit for dressing. A priest hung next, with his throat cut from ear to ear, who did not seem to have been long dead; and these two were the sole occupants of the Ogre's larder.

Joe Brown began to dislike the look of things very much, especially when one of the Ogres said to the other, "Did the Prince say they was to be killed and hung up directly?" "No, you duffer," replied the

other, "to wait till he come home." And with these words the three wretched Mortals were left alone. The old Witch now began to use the most fearful language, abusing Ogres, Fairies, and even her two companions, whom she said she would tear to pieces if she had but got them out of the wood; but as she hadn't, and could do nothing where she was, they cared but little for her threats.

Presently, the door opened, and one of the two servant Ogres entered, and cut the cord which bound Joe's arms and legs, at the same time driving him and his fellow-captives before him through the door. They passed along a cold damp passage till they came to a door at the end of it, on the left hand. This being opened, they found themselves in a large hall, with a big fire at one end, and a table before it, at each side of which sat an Ogre in an enormous arm-chair. At a glance Joe saw that whilst one of these Ogres was the one who had caught him, the other was the Oak-tree Ogre from whom he had escaped in the morning.

"Ho, ho!" laughed the latter, when he saw the captives enter. "Man's marrow-bones and liver! this is the Mortal whom I saw this morning, and who unaccountably gave me the slip! Girls' petticoates! we've got him now, though! And, as I live, here's the old Witch. Ha! my pet, my duckling, my tender love, don't I long to fix my teeth in your giblets! How good they will be!"

And he leered horribly at the old woman, who thereupon burst out into a torrent of abuse:

“You bloodthirsty brute—you cannibal—you wretch—you detestable monster—you anthropophagous demon——”

But she got no further ; for the Giant, who had risen as he finished his own speech, cut hers short by such a terrific kick as doubled the old Witch up like a ball, and sent her up with such force towards the roof, that striking a beam, which broke her back directly, she was dead as mutton before she reached the ground again : the Giant’s foot, however, caught her again, and she went up once more, and then fell with a dull thud against the pavement.

“Take her away, and dress her directly,” said the Ogre ; “there is nothing so good to eat as your real Witch, but they should always be dressed the same day, or they become tough, and don’t get tender again for an age. As for these other two, as we have game already hanging in the larder, we might keep them for a day or two, only there’s no knowing what tricks those confounded Fairies might play—perhaps they’d better be killed and hung up at once ; take them down, bleed the girl to death, that her flesh may be as white as possible, and cut the man’s throat in the back yard.”

The School-teacher instantly fainted, and Joe heard with very disagreeable feelings ; for no one likes the prospect of being killed like a pig, and afterwards eaten by an Ogre ; though it must be allowed that if the former fate happened to any of us, the latter would cause us little pain or trouble. But the reason

of the Ogre's order for his slaughter brought back to our traveller's mind the voice and the warning which he had heard. How foolish had he been ! He had trusted to his own strength and courage, and this was the result ! What could he do ? Was it now too late ? There was certainly no time to lose ; for as soon as the Ogre's order had been given, the servants raised the unhappy School-teacher from the ground, and giving Joe a push, drove him along the passage down which they had just before passed, at the end of which was a small yard, which they had crossed on leaving the larder, and which had every appearance of being the very back yard in which his throat was to be cut. He was half-way down the passage when these thoughts came into his head, and in a voice of regret and despair he sighed forth the words, " O for my Puss-cat Mew to help me now ! "

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth, when there came down the passage a soft breath of air from the fresh woodlands which he had so lately left ; it seemed to carry with it the most delicious perfume you can imagine—so sweet, and yet not too sweet ; so strong, and yet not too strong—that nothing was ever so perfectly exquisite. And with the perfume there came again a sweet, soft, clear voice—

" Faithless child of mortal race,
Courage take, and heart of grace ;
Banish doubt, away with fear,
Puss-cat Mew is ever near ! "

The servant Ogres did not seem to hear the voice, at least they paid no attention to it ; but the perfume was hateful to their blood-spoiled and brutalized senses.

“Ugh! what a horrible smell!” they each exclaimed ; and immediately fell down in a fainting-fit. At the same moment Joe saw the Tortoiseshell Cat standing at the end of the passage, and beckoning to him, and you may well believe that he lost no time in hurrying up to her. But he stopped when he came close, for he remembered his poor fellow-captive, and he could not bear the thoughts of leaving her to perish.

“Oh, Puss-cat Mew,” said he, “pray save that girl too!”

The Cat drew herself up with an angry kind of purr, and made no movement ; upon which Joe, being a brave fellow, and too chivalrous to neglect a lady in distress, declared that he must go back and bring the poor creature out. The Cat set up her back and looked cross, but the same low voice came floating over the yard from the free forest—

“Fear not for the maiden left,
Though of human aid bereft ;
Yet she Ogres need not dread,
Saints and angels guard her head ;
Spirits of the children taught,
And to know religion brought,
To her rescue soon will fly,
Nought her danger here to die.”

This somewhat reassured Joe, but that which did so even more was to see the School-teacher rise from

the place where the fainting Giants had dropped her, and follow him into the yard. A door stood open from the yard into the forest, through which the three passed, and the Teacher turned down a path to the left, which she said she somehow felt quite certain would lead her right. The Cat said not a word, but moved quietly along till the Teacher was gone, when she came up to Joe, and rubbed herself against his legs, seeming almost to smile as she looked up into his face.

“O you little darling!” he exclaimed; “you dear, good, charming little Puss-cat Mew! there never was, and never will be, such another Cat in the world as you. How shall I ever thank you enough for getting me out of that horrible place!”

Still the Cat spoke not, probably because cats don't generally speak, except under peculiar circumstances; but then Joe thought that his circumstances *were* rather peculiar, and expected this Cat might perhaps make an exception in his favour. But she kept on, still without speaking, till they had gone for some distance; then, without a word, good, bad, or indifferent, she disappeared behind a large old oak-tree, near which they were passing.

Joe was terribly puzzled, for he didn't know which way to go, or what to do; and, moreover, he began to feel rather hungry, which was not surprising, as it was now getting late, and he had tasted nothing since that bread and cheese which he had just finished before his capture by the Ogre. He searched his pockets

over and over again, but could only find a few crumbs, which went but a very little way towards satisfying his hunger ; and he therefore sat down under the old oak and began to consider what was the best thing to do next. He had not sat there long, however, before a loud shout at no very great distance convinced him that his flight had been discovered, and that the Ogres were in pursuit. However, he felt no alarm this time, being quite sure that his friends would not desert him. Nor indeed did they do so, for on a second roar being heard, evidently nearer than the first, a noise inside the tree immediately followed, and a passage opened, apparently of itself, in the tree, through which Joe instantly entered. What was his surprise and joy to find within the large hollow space inside the tree a small table with a white cloth upon it, which displayed a still further attraction in the shape of a fine beef-steak, with rich yellow fat and steaming gravy, together with a foaming pot of porter by its side. At the same time came the old, friendly voice—

“Son of Mortal, do not fear,
Fairies will no harm allow ;
Eat thy steak and drink thy beer,
Ogres shall not hurt thee now.”

Joe needed no second invitation, but, sitting down at once, made as good a dinner as he had ever made in his life. Whilst he was eating, he heard the Ogres trampling through the wood, and peeping out through a hole in the oak, saw no less than seven of these monsters passing by, and heard them talking about

his escape, and abusing the Fairies as the cause. Presently, however, their voices died away, and all sounds in the forest ceased. The inside of the oak was large, and, looking round, Joe perceived a comfortable bed made up in a corner.

"Well," said he, "this is the very thing for me!" and without more ado he tumbled into it, and was fast asleep in a very few moments.

How long he slept I cannot say, but it was late in the evening when he laid down, and when he opened his eyes it was broad daylight. He jumped up, and rubbed his eyes two or three times before he could remember where he was, but after a while he began to recollect all that had happened, and to think that it was high time to take some steps to escape from the neighbourhood of such unpleasant people as the Ogres, from whom he had taken refuge in his present curious quarters. Accordingly, he got up, and was charmed to see that a bath stood near him, ready filled with water, of which he speedily availed himself, and, after a good wash, found himself fresh enough to be quite ready to start upon another day's adventures.

The first thought that occurred to him was how to get out of the oak. This, however, did not trouble him long, for scarcely had he laid his hand against the inside of the tree, when a door flew open for him of its own accord, and he passed out into the forest. All was quiet, and the morning sun lit up the woodland scenery with its bright rays; the birds

were singing, and everything appeared as beautiful and joyous as if there were no such beings as Ogres in the world. Uncertain whether to turn to the right or the left, he got rid of the difficulty by going straight on, and, as he did so, began to wonder whether he should now be allowed to leave the forest, or be still as unable to do so as he was the day before.

As he walked along, meditating upon this point, he came suddenly upon a very little man, sitting on a faggot, and sharpening a stick with a penknife. Little indeed was his body, but his head was enormously big ; his hair was red, his nose was hooked, and he squinted fearfully. Joe didn't like the looks of him a bit, but he thought to himself that it was wrong to judge by appearances, and that, if the worst came to the worst, he could manage to get the better of such a chap as that in a fair stand-up fight. So he bowed civilly, and without more ado asked the little man if he could show him the way out of the forest.

The little man instantly jumped up, squinting more than ever, and, looking Joe straight in the face, exclaimed, in a voice so harsh and unpleasant as to increase the feeling of distrust which had already taken possession of the traveller—

“Out of the forest? Eggs and nuts! that I can, my fine fellow. Follow me, and I'll soon put you right ;” and so saying, he set off at a short trot, stopping every moment to beckon Joe to follow. Joe

began to do so ; but scarcely had he gone a step, before a low sigh seemed to steal across his ear, like that which he had heard under the fir-tree the day before, and, being wiser by experience, he immediately came to a full stop. His companion turned round upon this, and sharply asked him what he was about ?

"It strikes me," replied Joe, "that you are not leading me the right way out of the wood."

"Strikes you ?" answered the little man, angrily ; "*what* strikes you, and *who* strikes you, and what do you mean by it ? If you know the way better than I do, you had better go first ; and if not, follow me without any nonsense. Don't suppose that *I'm* to be humbugged ; come on !" and with these words he walked close up to Joe Brown, and taking hold of his coat with one hand, pointed with the other in the direction he had been going.

Joe still hesitated. "You see," he said, "this is a queer sort of place, and I've been in one bad scrape already."

"You'll be in another in half a minute," said his guide, "if you're such a fool as to stand shilly-shallying here ;" and without more to-do he gave Joe such a pull by the coat as nearly threw him off his balance, and made him aware that there was more strength in the little man than he had thought possible in so small a body.

"I wish I could consult Puss-cat Mew," he said, almost without meaning to speak ; and the words

were scarcely out of his mouth, when a low, angry purr was heard, and, springing in suddenly between Joe and his companion, Puss-cat Mew, without the least warning, gave the latter such a scratch down his ugly face, that the blood followed the marks of her claws immediately, and the victim roared aloud, and struck a fearful blow at the Cat. This, however, she easily avoided, and in the short battle which followed not once could the little man strike her; whilst she, darting in at every opportunity, so scratched his head and face, that he presently fled bellowing into the wood with all possible speed, and left the astonished Joe alone with his faithful friend.

Joe now hoped that he should receive some explanation from the Cat as to what had just occurred, and some plain directions as to what course he was to pursue in order to get out of the forest; for although it was undoubtedly a fine thing to have such good friends there to save him from Ogres and other enemies, he by no means desired to spend the rest of his life in that particular place.

Puss-cat Mew, however, said never a word; and yet Joe thought she must be able to speak, because he was very sure that it was from her that the words, "Stand hard, Joey," came when they first met. All she did, after looking up at him in a friendly manner, and rubbing against his leg, was to trot on into the wood, and beckon with her fore-paw for him to follow, which he did without the least hesitation. They went on and on under the high trees for some little way,

until, as they were slowly descending a hill where the underwood was somewhat thicker, Joe thought he heard again the distant shout of an Ogre. He pulled up short, but, as the Cat beckoned to him and seemed to frown, soon went on again, and at the bottom of the hill saw that the wood fell away gradually from an open grassy space, in the middle of which bubbled up a clear spring of water, from which a stream seemed to take its birth, and to flow merrily forward into the woods below.

Puss-cat Mew paused at the edge of the wood, where the open space began, and without entering it herself, pointed to Joe, and made signs that he should do so ; which he immediately did. Hardly had he set foot within the space and trod upon the green grass, than there sprang up around him a myriad Fairy forms, like those that children see in the Christmas pantomimes, only smaller and prettier ; and oh ! so graceful in every movement that it was marvellous to see them. They formed a circle round the astonished Joe, and began a dance, the like of which he had never seen or heard of before, whilst at the same time they were accompanied by the sweetest possible music, which proceeded from invisible minstrels.

Joe stood entranced and delighted ; this was indeed Fairyland, and to have seen such a sight and heard such sounds was really worth the dangers which he had encountered. After the dancing had continued for some little time, the Fairy forms fell back behind the fountain, in front of which Joe was

standing, and ranged themselves in a semicircle, whilst one of their number, coming forward and standing under the very spray of the water as it bubbled up, sang sweetly forth the following words—

“Seldom is a Mortal seen
On the magic Fairy Green ;
Seldom will the Fairies rise
Thus to dance for mortal eyes ;
Seldom may a Mortal hear
Strains to Fairy minstrel dear.
Mortal ! since to thee kind Fate
Gives these glades to penetrate,
Listen with an awe profound
Whilst I tell of foes around ;
Listen, ere thou longer stray,
Hear my mandate—and obey.
Wherefore didst thou come to roam
All around the Ogres’ home ?
Daring Mortal ! were it not
Plot is met by counterplot,
Ere thou reach’dst Fairy Green
Food for Ogres thou hadst been.
Seven Ogres, fierce and strong,
Terrify this forest long ;
Slaves to whom there likewise be
Dwarfs of might—in number three.
Then beware, thou miller’s son,
Of these Dwarfs speak thou to none ;
Trust alone to Fairies true
And the faithful Puss-cat Mew.
Thus I give thee, on our green,
Message from the Fairy Queen !”

Here the Fairy stopped ; and Joe, who was no great poet, but of a practical turn of mind, took off his hat, as civilly as he could, and with great respect addressed her in the following words :—

"If you please, ma'am, *would* you be kind enough to speak for once without rhyme, and tell me how I can get out of this forest?"

With a gracious smile, the Fairy instantly replied.

"Joe Brown," said she, "you must be well aware that the universal custom of Fairies all over the world, and at all times, has been to speak in verse, and to address by the general term 'Mortal' the individual whom they honoured by speaking to him. But as you are a good sort of fellow, and I am directed by our Queen to do what I can for you, I have no objection to give you a little information in English prose. You must know that the seven Ogres who inhabit a castle in the middle of this wood are about the worst Ogres, as well as the greatest scamps, in the country. Old Grindbones is the chief one; and Smashman, his nephew, is every bit as bad as he: the other five are of an inferior class; but no man, woman, or child is safe within half a mile of any of them. We Fairies have done, and still do, everything that can be done, to protect the unhappy people who *will* keep coming into the forest; but, of course, we have other things to do, and we cannot be always bothering ourselves with these matters, which really ought to be settled by the Rural Police. What makes it much worse is the recent arrival of three Dwarfs, who have bound themselves to serve the Ogres for a certain payment, and who do their best to entice travellers to the castle of their masters. The names of these dwarfs are Juff, Jumper, and Gandle-

perry ; and, fortunately for you, it was Jumper whom you lately met, and whose very appearance set you upon your guard. Had it been Gandleperry, I would not have answered for the consequences, for a slyer or more arrant knave doesn't exist. However, all you have now to do is, to walk quite straight forward, and on no account either scratch your left leg or turn your head round for a moment. If you do, evil may follow ; if not, half a mile will bring you to the edge of the wood, when, if you stand upon your head whilst you count ten, throw up your hat in the air twice, and take off your boots and carry them in your hand, you will find yourself able to leave the forest and go where you will."

Having made this speech, which the White Cat told the Brown Kitten was supposed to be the very longest ever made by a Fairy, the pretty creature gracefully waved her hand to Joe, and in a moment the whole of the party vanished from his sight. He stood for a moment plunged in thought, and then boldly stepped forward, determined, at all hazards, to get out of the wood. Half a mile was no great distance, and he thought it would be easy enough to do as he had been told by his kind adviser. He had not gone ten yards, however, before his right leg began to itch violently, just as happens to people when they walk across the cornfields directly after harvest. Without a thought, he stooped down, and relieved it by a violent and comfortable scratching. Then his left leg began to itch horribly too ; but just as he was going

to treat it in the same manner, he remembered the Fairy's warning, and stopped himself in time. Oh! how he longed to scratch his leg! but he bravely bore it, and went on as fast as he could. He was half-way to the edge of the wood, when he heard a voice behind him, calling out—

“Joe! Joe Brown! stop a minute, will ye?”

But the warning had been so lately given, that he never turned his head, and only hurried on all the faster. He was actually within twenty yards of the outside, and in another minute would have been there—and this story, for all I know, would never have been written—when, close behind him, he heard a scream, a loud scream, which startled him so as to make him forget everything he had been thinking of before. It was the voice of a woman in distress, and, to his ears, sounded as if it was certainly the voice of his own mother.

“Oh, Joe, dear Joe,” it said, in heartrending accents, “don’t leave me behind, *please* don’t. I’m caught in the brambles here, and can’t get on anyhow.”

Joe loved his mother dearly, and without thinking for a moment of anything else, turned round, head and all, and made for the thicket whence the sound had come. He reached it, but could see no mother, nor indeed any woman at all. What he *did* see, however, was more remarkable than comforting. A Dwarf was sitting upon a fallen tree, with his two thumbs one in each of his waistcoat-pockets, peering into the thicket, as if he was looking for something.

Very unlike the Dwarf whom Joe had met before was this little man. He was older, had a black coat and buff waistcoat on, and his face was by no means disagreeable to look at, if there had not been a certain odd appearance about his eyes, which made Joe feel at once that he was a deep old fellow, who knew what was what as well as most people.


"Did you scream, sir?" said Joe.

"Scream, sir?—no, sir: I did *not* scream," answered the Dwarf, with perfect politeness; "but I certainly *heard* a scream, sir, and a woman's scream. In fact, I was just looking for the person who *did* scream, sir. I think it must have been in the thicket beyond, sir, and not here. Perhaps you will aid me in my search, since we are both on the same errand?"

Joe, who smelt mischief, would have given the world to refuse, but hardly knew how to do so, and, accordingly, took a step or two towards the other thicket, into which he and the Dwarf carefully looked, but could see no woman, principally because no woman was there. For you must know that the scream had really proceeded from the little man himself, who was none other than the celebrated Dwarf Gandleperry, who had come out to entrap the unfortunate Joe, and to deliver him to the Ogres. The Dwarfs' bargain with the Ogres was that they should have the head of every other Mortal whom they brought to the Ogres—for there is nothing Dwarfs like so much as brains, and they will go any distance, and play any trick, in order to secure this delicacy.

Of course, I say, they found no woman, and heard no more screams ; but the Dwarf began to talk to Joe in such a pleasant and amusing manner, that he soon lost his first feeling of mistrust, and began to think that he had found an agreeable companion. Instead of walking straight back, however, the little man bore to the left, so that they soon left the Fairy Green behind them on the right. Joe asked what was the sound of falling water which he heard ; to which his companion replied, that there was a spring which rose down there, but that the ground was so wet and soft about it, that it was best to go someway round. Joe ought to have known from this that something was wrong, since he had so recently crossed the place himself ; but somehow his senses were lulled to rest, and he seemed to walk on in a kind of dream, listening to the Dwarf, and being only half awake to the reality of the scene. He was roughly awakened, however, before long, for, as they entered the thicker part of the wood, beyond the Fairy Green, two other Dwarfs suddenly sprang out of a neighbouring thicket, each armed with a thick stick, and fell upon Joe in a moment. His companion, too, ceasing from his pleasant conversation, joined in the attack, and shouted loudly at the same time—

“ Well done, Juff! down with him, Jumper!” and then, as Joe recognised in one of the new-comers the ill-looking Dwarf from whom Puss-cat Mew had before delivered him, he became suddenly aware that he had fallen into the hands of three rascals who would



certainly deliver him to the Ogres if he could not escape. Joe was a strong man, and a bold, and he fought bravely ; but three to one is fearful odds. He knocked one of Juff's teeth down his throat, and caught Jumper a regular stinger on his red nose ; but Gandleperry evaded his blows, and struck him such a tremendous crack over the head with a life-preserver, that he sank down senseless on the ground, whilst the other two Dwarfs rained blows upon him with their sticks till they felt pretty sure they had left no breath in his body. Then they all three stood a few yards off and burst into a roar of savage laughter.

"So much for the Fairies' pet," said Jumper. "It's worth all the scratches on my face to have caught this ugly brute," and he laughed again.

"Well," said Gandleperry, "I thought I could manage it, and so I have. Now you two fellows had better carry him up to the castle."

"Thank you for nothing," answered Juff ; "do you expect us to go and carry a great lumbering carcase like that, whilst you go lounging about and amusing yourself? Not a yard will I carry him, unless you help."

"You forget yourself strangely," said Gandleperry ; "but I have no time for disputes. Bring the carrion up or not, as you please. I shall go on to the castle and tell Grindbones that the Mortal is caught and killed, and he will probably come and meet you, or at least send one of his servants to bring the game in." And with these words he quietly walked away.

"This won't do," said Juff to Jumper, as soon as he was gone. "I'll tell you what the old boy means to do. He'll tell his story first, and get all the credit with the old Ogre, and then, whilst we are bringing the booty in, *he* will get the promise of the head, and our share will be but small. Don't let us be done by old Gandleperry like this! Let us slip off and get to the castle before him, and the Ogres can send their own servants to fetch the Mortal's body."

This proposal appeared to please Jumper, and off they both set as fast as they could go.

Poor Joe lay still enough, and no one would have given much for his life at that moment. But the Dwarfs had scarcely left the place when something so cold and refreshing touched his forehead, that it brought back his senses directly. He slowly opened his eyes, and beheld a sight the most welcome that could have met his gaze. Puss-cat Mew was leaning over him, and bathing his face and head with some mixture of so refreshing a character, that it seemed to put new life into him every moment. She looked very grave and sad, and was evidently quite alive to the danger he was in. Drawing from her apron-pocket a small box, she took out of it a very little bottle, which she gave to him, and made signs that he should drink its contents. Having done so, he found himself so much better that he was able, though with difficulty, to stand upright, and very slowly to creep along after his faithful friend, who kept beckoning and urging him along, until they came to the very

selfsame oak in which he had slept the night before. Luckily it was at no great distance from the place where he had been so cruelly beaten by the three Dwarfs, for, had it been much further, he could not have struggled so far before his enemies would have overtaken him. As it was, the back door had scarcely opened to receive him before he heard the roar of the infuriated Ogres, who had come back with the Dwarfs and found their prey gone. Their shouts of rage rent the forest air, and poor Joe trembled as he lay on his bed and listened to the fearful sounds.

When he was safely in bed, Puss-cat Mew brought a pot of wonderful ointment, which she ordered him to rub carefully into every part of him that had been bruised by the blows of the Dwarfs ; which he did, and experienced great relief.

For three days and three nights, however, the poor fellow remained in the oak, carefully nursed by his kind friend, and requiring nothing except that she should speak to him, which she never did, by any accident. On the fourth morning he felt so well and strong that he expressed his desire to go out, and, touching the bark as before, found himself again in the forest. His guide showed him the same way as before, and he arrived quite safely at the Fairy Green, where she again disappeared.

He boldly stepped into the open space, as he had done upon his first visit, but no Fairy forms arose around him. Perhaps they were angry at his foolish disobedience of the directions given him ; but still

that could hardly be the case, or why had they allowed Puss-cat Mew to help him again? And as he came near the spring, the old, soft, low voice stole gently through the air, and said to him, in friendly tones—

“Remember, Mortal, thou hast seen
The revels of the Fairy Green ;
Hast heard the words of warning true
From one who falsehood never knew.
Unchanged is truth—so ponder o’er
The same directions as before.
Obey—and never count the cost ;
But disobey, and thou art lost !”

4

Joe heard with attention, and determined that come what might, he would not be tempted again to forget the directions which he had received. He set off from the Fairy Spring, and walked briskly towards the edge of the forest. His legs both itched violently as before, but not a scratch did they get, and he arrived within a few yards of the edge without the slightest adventure of any kind. Then, suddenly, he heard a voice calling to him loudly—

“Joe, Joe,” it said, “turn round, you rascal Joe! you coward, are you afraid of an old man? I’ll fight ye for half-a-crown, Joe! Turn and come on! don’t run away like a cur with his tail between his legs.”

Joe heard plainly enough, and recognised the tones of the wily Gandleperry, but was resolved to make no mistake this time ; so, although the Dwarf called him all the bad names he could lay his tongue to, he kept boldly on until he reached the edge of the forest.

Then he immediately stood upon his head and counted ten, as he had been told by the Fairy. Next he threw his hat in the air, and then began to take off his boots. All this time the angry Dwarf was abusing him with all his might, but to no purpose. Off came Joe's boots ; he took them in his hand, and in another moment was outside the forest. Hardly was he there when he boldly turned round, knowing that the spell was broken, and there he saw, not only Gandleperry gnashing his teeth in rage and fury, but three of the Ogres running up behind him, and showing plainly enough their fury and disappointment. But, luckily for him, the magic power which had kept him so long in the wood was even more powerful over them, and they were not able to pass the edge of the forest. They were therefore compelled to content themselves with yells and threats, which did Joe not the slightest harm, and he walked off, highly delighted at having at last been able to leave the scene of his troubles. He began to whistle a merry tune, which he had not done all the morning before, having been told, I suppose, by some wise person or another, that "you should never whistle till you are out of the wood."

As Joe walked onwards, he cast many a thought back to his friends the Fairies, and especially to that kind and faithful Puss-cat Mew to whom, as he rightly felt, he owed everything ; and he sighed heavily as he thought that perhaps he might never more see one who had become so dear to him, and in whom he had

begun to take the deepest interest. His path lay over rough ground, with brakes and briars growing around on every side, for several hundred yards after he had left the forest ; and it then led him suddenly into a broad track, on one side of which was a fence of tangled thorns, through which no human being could ever have forced his way ; whilst on the other was a steep precipice, over which if a fellow fell, his friends would have found him in several pieces if they took the trouble to go round, and down to the bottom, to look after him. As, however, the pathway was at least a dozen yards wide, Joe thought little about these obstacles to his going right or left, and trudged steadily on.

All at once he became aware of another obstacle of a different nature. The path, at a short distance before him, sloped rapidly down to the valley below ; and just where it began to do so, nearly in the middle of the path, sat an old woman in a red cloak ; while, to his great astonishment, a broad—very broad—bar of iron, perfectly red-hot, stretched completely across the path right and left of her. As turning back was out of the question, Joe boldly advanced ; but when he got within a couple of yards of the bar, it began to fizz and glow, and threw out such a strong heat that he stepped back a pace or two, quite unable to proceed.

“ Well, Dame,” he said, addressing the old woman, “ what’s the matter *here* ? Do you keep a toll-bar ? or why mayn’t I pass on ? ”

The person he addressed had her back to him, but, turning round when he spoke, disclosed a face very much wrinkled, the nose of which was like the beak of a hawk, and the chin at least a yard and a half long.

"I am sure you are welcome to pass," said she; "but *I* have nothing to do with it. I am only here to see whether anybody burns themselves. In fact, you know, I'm not the master, but the Bar-maid."

Joe thought she was the queerest-looking barmaid *he* had ever seen, and didn't quite believe her story; however, he did not say so, but went again up to the bar, with the same result. The old woman said no more, but sat still, knitting away at a pair of stockings all the time with the greatest composure. Joe was fairly puzzled, and at last, in despair, exclaimed—

"Well, it really *does* seem a strange thing, that, after escaping the Ogres and Dwarfs, I am to be stopped here by a bar of iron! Oh, Puss-cat Mew! can't you help me now?"

At that very moment he turned his head, and, to his great delight, perceived his friend sitting down behind him in the middle of the pathway.

"O you beauty!—you darling!" he cried; "now I shall be all right again!"

And kneeling down, he took her in his arms, and kissed her again and again with joy and gratitude; whilst she softly purred, as if by no means displeased at the attention. But when he put her down, she no longer led the way, as she had done in the forest, but

merely rubbed against his leg, and kept on purring. Joe was fairly puzzled for some time, till at last he thought he understood that she wanted to be carried ; and accordingly he took her up in his arms again, and walked up to the bar. To his great surprise, as he neared it, it quietly sank into the earth, leaving a black, burnt mark where it had descended, over which he stepped, and found himself free to descend the grassy slope of the hill before him, which he now saw with astonishment would lead him right down upon the river, upon which, but a short distance off, stood his father's mill. He had hardly time, however, to remark this, when his surprise was increased tenfold. Puss-cat Mew sprang out of his arms the very moment they crossed the black line ; her skin fell off, her whole appearance changed, and she stood before him the most charming young Lady he had ever seen. I cannot attempt to describe her ; but let everybody that reads this story think who is the prettiest person he or she has ever seen, and Puss-cat Mew was just like *her*. All I do know is, that, under a gown which was quite smart enough for the occasion, she had the most magnificently embroidered petticoat you can imagine.

But this was not all that happened. The red cloak of the old woman fell off her shoulders, her head with the ugly face disappeared, and there stood in her place a grand and lovely Lady, small, but exquisitely made, and with something so noble and royal in her appearance, that Joe Brown took off his hat directly and made a very low bow.

“Joe Brown,” said the Lady, in a voice so sweet and yet so dignified that it filled Joe with admiration—“Joe Brown, the time is come when you may be told much which you might not know before. I am the Queen of the Fairies, and Puss-cat Mew is my favourite daughter. As you are a good young man, I am willing to bestow her hand upon you, and a better wife could no man wish ; but it is necessary to tell you several things which are most important for you to know. Owing to circumstances which I must not explain, the destiny of Fairies and of mankind is linked together in a curious way, and both of them have something akin to the mere animals. For instance, it is well known that the face of every man who comes into the world wears, when he grows up, an expression like the face of some animal—a horse, a sheep, a dog, a fox, or some other creature of the same sort. Now, in Fairies destiny takes a different turn. We are liable to be obliged actually to take the shape of some animal during a portion of our lives ; and thus it is that my daughter has appeared to you as a Cat. The only way in which she could hope permanently to resume her own shape was by marrying a Mortal, and you are the fortunate object of her choice. The bar which you have just passed, and which will rise again after you have descended the hill, prevents any one from leaving the outskirts of this forest and descending into the valley. The Ogres cannot leave the forest ; and although Fairies can of course do more than such wretches as they, yet

no Fairy can pass this bar unless carried by a Mortal, except on very special occasions, and for a short time only. You could not have passed the bar without Fairy aid, nor could Puss-cat Mew have done so without you. Take her, then, Joe, and make her a good husband. Remember, however, that you obey the directions which I now give you. Once every year, on the anniversary of the day on which you are married, Puss-cat Mew must wear that garment which she now has on, her best embroidered petticoat. That would seem to you a simple thing enough, but you little know how much depends upon it. It is necessary that, for three years to come, my dear daughter should daily drink a bason of milk; at the end of that time, no rules will be necessary, and she will be quite safe, and beyond the power of evil. But if, during the three years, she omits for one day to drink her milk, and forgets to wear the petticoat on her marriage anniversary, her enemies will have power over her, and she will have to become a Cat again. And one more thing I must tell you, namely, that if during the time that she is wearing her petticoat it gets the least bit torn or burnt, no one but a Fairy can mend it, and it must be mended in this forest, and with Fairy silk. Until this is done, she will be lost to you, and you may fancy the difficulty of getting it done in a place where our enemies are so continually on the watch. Here there is no milk, so that no Fairy has a chance of drinking for three years, and so being able to keep a Mortal shape.

Puss-cat Mew, therefore, will depend upon your care and attention, and I am sure you will never repent the day on which she becomes your wife."

Joe listened with respectful attention to the words of the Fairy Queen, and faithfully promised that which was required. He didn't the least object to marry the young lady who stood blushing before him, for not only was he exceedingly grateful for all the services she had rendered him as Puss-cat Mew, but he had really become exceedingly fond of her; and this fondness was by no means diminished when he looked upon the great beauty of her present appearance. The Fairy Queen now kissed her daughter; and bidding them both farewell, disappeared from their sight; whilst Joe tenderly embraced his bride, and they descended the hill together, and made the best of their way to the old miller's house.

Joe's father and mother were delighted to see him again, and still more so with the beautiful wife whom he had brought with him. Puss-cat Mew was welcomed with the greatest tenderness, which she returned with an affection which greatly pleased the old couple. Moreover, they soon found that it was a great advantage to have a Fairy for a daughter-in-law, for she was the handiest creature imaginable, and everything she laid her hand to seemed to prosper. The mill went merrily, and money came so fast into the miller's pocket, that he was able to enlarge his house, which he made very comfortable, and to greatly increase his business.


So time rolled on, and Joe began to think himself the happiest fellow in the world,—and so I dare say he was while those jolly days lasted. He never forgot the cup of milk for his wife—it was placed every morning on a little table by her bedside ; and, in case of any accident, the miller had three fine cows in his meadow by the river, so that there might always be a good supply of the delicious fluid.

At last the year passed away, and the day dawned which was the first anniversary of Joe's wedding-day. Puss-cat Mew did not forget the embroidered petticoat, which had been carefully put away the year before. She took it out of the wardrobe with great care, and put it on just as it was ; and very well she looked in it. They had had many consultations as to how she had better pass the day so as most surely to avoid any danger to the important garment, and at last it was determined that Puss-cat Mew should remain all day in the front room, and keep as quiet as possible. So she did, and the day passed off without any particular occurrence till quite towards the evening. Then, as it grew chilly, the fire was lighted and blazed up merrily. The old people were sitting on one side of it, Joe and his wife on the other, when suddenly a large coal, all alight, bounced from the fire and fell close to Joe's mother. They all started up, but Puss-cat Mew was quicker than any of them, and springing over the coal, caught the old lady's dress and pulled it away lest it should catch fire. Unlucky action ! In so doing she either touched the coal with

her own dress, or the wind of her dress in passing over it made it flare up ; whatever was the cause, however, the sad result was the same ; in one instant her petticoat caught light, and although Joe extinguished it in a moment, a large and undeniable hole was burnt in it ! Her face grew deadly pale at the same moment, her dress fell from her, and in the twinkling of an eye Joe and his parents saw nothing before them but a Tortoiseshell Cat, which, with a melancholy mew, vanished from their sight, whilst at the same moment a harsh and cruel voice was heard to exclaim the fated words—

“ Puss-cat Mew jumped over a coal,
In her best petticoat burnt a great hole ;
Puss-cat Mew shan't have any milk
Till her best petticoat's mended with silk.”

They all three looked round, and beheld the hateful face of Jumper, gleaming with malicious pleasure. Joe rushed out, but the Dwarf was off at the top of his speed, and there was no chance of catching him. Poor Joe Brown ! He threw himself on the ground in the deepest misery, and his parents' efforts to console him were all in vain. His loved, his beautiful wife was gone—gone for ever—and probably in the power of her enemies. He felt that life without her was impossible, and his first impulse was to kill himself in the quickest way he could. However, on reflection, he remembered that this would do neither himself nor Puss-cat Mew the slightest good, and would, moreover, please her enemies more than



anything else. He took a second and a better resolution, and this was to devote the rest of his life to the endeavour to recover his lost and loved one.

From what the Fairy Queen had told him, it was evident that the forest was the place in which alone this could be accomplished, and the question was whether he could manage to get the petticoat mended in the forest without being slain by the Ogres or entrapped by the crafty Dwarfs. His old father had often told him that "courage overcame difficulties," and although both father and mother were very much averse to his leaving them again, yet when they saw that he was quite determined to do so, and remembered how much he owed to Puss-cat Mew, they could say no more; and, after tenderly embracing and blessing him, bade him farewell.

This was a very different starting from his last, when he had nothing to think of but the adventures of which he was in search, and was as light-hearted and merry as could be. Now, his heart was heavy enough, and his hopes were all set upon the recovery of his lost treasure. The petticoat was safely tied up and fastened to his waist, and with a stout oaken staff in his hand he set out for the forest.

As he walked along, however, he thought long and anxiously as to what would be the best course to pursue; for, after all, he could hardly hope to escape his enemies and succeed in recovering his wife, unless some help could be found. Whilst he was thinking, he drew nearer and nearer to the forest, until he was

quite close to it ; and at that moment he perceived a Fox standing at the edge of the wood, and looking steadily at him. The animal did not run away, or appear the least frightened, but, on his coming near, sat up on its hind-legs and began to talk to him at once—

“ Joe Brown,” it said, “ you are come upon a dangerous business. I know your story, and am come to give you all the aid in my power ; for I pity you from the bottom of my heart.”

“ Thank you, Mr. Fox,” replied poor Joe ; “ if you really *can* help me, I shall never forget your kindness.”

“ Well,” rejoined the animal, “ you know that foxes are by no means fools, and I hope to show you that I am not a friend to be despised. Take these three hairs from my brush, and be careful to remember what I now tell you. These are the means by which your dearest wishes may be accomplished ; but first you must place each one separately upon the palm of your left hand, and pronounce the magic word ‘ Leeneitz.’ ”

Joe took the three hairs as he was told, and laying the first one upon the palm of his left hand, pronounced the word as the Fox had done, when the hair immediately turned into a bright steel dagger, sharp and strong.

“ This,” said the Fox, “ is a dagger which even the tough hide of an Ogre cannot turn aside ; it will stand you in good stead in the hour of need.”

Joe then tried the second hair, which, upon the magic word being spoken, changed into a snuff-box, full of such strong snuff, that, even though the lid was shut, it set Joe sneezing at once.

"Now," said the Fox, "this snuff makes you sneeze, it is true, but it also sends any one who smells it to sleep very shortly, and if your enemies have once taken a good pull at it, they will be quiet enough for a few hours, I'll warrant you."

Joe then tried the third hair, which, somewhat to his surprise, became a left-hand glove.

"Do not despise it, Joe Brown," said the Fox; "when this glove is upon your left hand you will be invisible. Thus you have three powerful weapons to use against your foes, although you must remember that you can only use one of them at a time; but as I notice that your oaken staff there is tipped with lead, I think you are really so well armed, that only common courage and caution are needful to give you every hope of success."

"I thank you," said Joe, "from the bottom of my heart; but, oh! can you tell me where I shall be likely to find my wife—my own beloved Puss-cat Mew?"

The Fox shook his head solemnly, and replied—"That belongs to others to tell. I have performed my part, as directed by One who has a right to direct me, and I can say and do no more for you." With which words she darted after a hare which was sauntering by at the moment, and was out of sight instantly. But Joe felt more cheerful after what he had heard

and the gifts which he had received. He boldly entered the wood, and shaped his course towards where he supposed the Fairy Spring to be. As he went along, however, something suddenly dropped upon him from a tree and lighted on his shoulders, with its legs one on each side of his neck, while a voice at the same time exclaimed, in rough tones of exultation—

“ I’ve nabbed him ! I’ve nabbed him ! ”

In an instant Joe recognised the voice of one of the Dwarfs, and dropping suddenly upon his knees, sent the little man flying over his head ; but, not knowing how near the other Dwarfs might be, he then put on the left-hand glove as fast as he could, determined to try its powers. The Dwarf jumped up in a fury, but his face expressed blank astonishment as he looked at where Joe had been standing, and where indeed he was really standing still, but the Dwarf could not see him. It was Juff who had made this attack and been so roughly thrown on the ground, and he now exclaimed, in a voice of mingled anger and surprise—

“ Why, where on earth has the fellow got to ? Vile Mortal—where are you ? ”

Joe stood quite still, delighted to have proved the power of his glove, and the truth of the Fox.

“ This must be seen to,” said Juff, and ran growling off in a rage.

Joe could have probably slain him, as the little villain seemed to be all alone, but he was full of anxiety to reach the Fairy Spring, where he hoped to

hear news of his dear one ; so he thought not of pursuit, but pushed forward till he came close to the spot. He stepped sadly on to the green space. The fountain seemed no longer to sparkle so brightly and play so merrily as it had done when he first saw it. There was something mournful in its appearance, and the stream seemed to sigh as it slowly trickled away into the forest.

Joe sat down upon the ground, and fairly sobbed aloud. At last, in a sad tone of voice, he said—

“Oh, Fairies, tell me of my darling ! tell me how to recover my adorable Puss-cat Mew !”

Soft and low came the voice this time, in sweet but plaintive strain, and Joe clasped his hands tightly and listened :—

“Puss-cat Mew in dungeon pines :
Every day the Ogre grim
On the flesh of Mortal dines,
Boasting none can conquer him :
Boasts he too, that villain dread,
Shortly he will capture you,
And will lay your bleeding head
At the feet of Puss-cat Mew.
Should this monster, whom we hate,
In the forest take thy life,
Know the solemn doom of Fate—
Puss-cat Mew must be his wife !
Speaking only Ogre tongue,
Fairy music all forgot,
Doomed to nourish Ogres young—
Can there be more cruel lot ?
Mortal ! steel thy gallant heart,
Be thou cautious, bold, and true,
From the forest ne’er depart
Till thou rescue Puss-cat Mew !”

Joe jumped up with a bound, and raised his oak-staff high in the air.

"By everything I hold dear!" he cried, "never will I turn back from this venture till I rescue my true love from so terrible a fate. Courage! I should be a recreant knave indeed if I had it not. The blood of all the Browns foams and boils in my veins. I am ready for the fray!" and without more to say or do, he walked out of the green and marched boldly forward.


He had not gone far before he heard footsteps, and looking round, having first put on his glove, he perceived the Dwarf Juff, with two of the Ogres, talking eagerly.

"Why don't he eat her?" said the Dwarf.

"You little hop-o'-my-thumb!" growled one of the Giants, "you can't eat a Fairy, you know, or he'd have made but a mouthful of her. But if he catches that lout of a Mortal whom she is so sweet on, he can eat *him*, and then he has the right to marry her. But I know one thing—I wouldn't marry such a squalling Cat for ninepence-halfpenny. The row she makes after that Joe! I wish I had him here! I'd Joe him! Wouldn't you, Mumble-chumps?"

"Yes," returned the other Ogre, to whom he had spoken; "yes, brother Munch'emup, I think we could show him a trick or two worth mentioning."

"Why don't you do it, then?" said a loud voice close to them; and Joe, with his glove on, hit Juff



such a crack on the head that the little wretch rolled over like a ninepin.

"Help, oh, help me!" he roared in agony, as Joe dealt him another blow; but the Ogres could see nobody, and therefore did nothing, whilst Juff lay there bellowing.

However, Joe, finding how well he was concealed by his glove, and being highly indignant with the Ogre Munch'emup, who had spoken so disrespectfully of Puss-cat Mew, dealt him a blow across the shins with his staff, which made him jump.

"What do you mean by kicking me, Mumblechumps?" asked he.

"I didn't touch you," answered the other, to whom Joe at the same time administered a like blow.

"But I'm not going to stand being kicked by you!" and as Joe dealt them another blow apiece, the two monsters furiously attacked each other, each believing that his friend had assaulted him.

Joe stepped back and watched the fight with interest, until a blow from Mumblechumps felled Munch'emup to the ground, where he lay senseless. Joe now thought that he had better play out *his* part in the game, so he saluted the other Ogre with a tremendous stroke on the wrist, which was nearly broken by the lead-tipped staff.

The Giant roared with fury, but could see no one to strike, and another blow on the inside of the knee-cap brought him on his knees. Then Joe struck him

on the head with his full force, crying out as he did so—

“Puss-cat Mew sends you this!” and the Ogre toppled over with a groan.

To make matters safe, Joe (having taken off his glove) took his steel dagger, and put an end to the two murdering villains who lay there. As to the wretch Juff, he begged hard for mercy, and Joe was inclined to spare him on account of his size, and would probably have done so had not the old voice at that moment sounded in his ears, less softly and sweetly than ever before—

“Spare not the Dwarfs ! for they are sent
Down to that dungeon day by day ;
With jeers they Puss-cat Mew torment :
Wherefore 'tis justice bids thee slay !”

“Say you so?” cried Joe ; “then, by my grandmother’s petticoat, *this* rascal jeers no more !” and he raised his staff over his head.

“Oh dear, oh dear !” yelled Juff, “I didn’t do it—I didn’t mean to—I wasn’t there—it was somebody else.” And he howled in abject terror ; but Joe, having once invoked his grandmother’s petticoat, which was the most solemn form of adjuration known among the Brown family, hesitated no longer, but dashed out the brains of the miserable Dwarf with his staff immediately.

But the mention of the garment which had caused all his troubles made Joe recollect that it was still fastened to his waist, and indeed he had found it

rather inconvenient during his late exertions. Moreover, he had now fully made up his mind to attack the Ogres in their castle, but he did not see how he was likely to get the petticoat mended with Fairy silk *there*, and he determined to retrace his steps to the Fairy Green and there leave it. The spring appeared to bubble up rather more merrily when he stepped upon the green, but there was still a melancholy look about the place. Joe spread the garment carefully out before the spring, and, as he found the Fairies always spoke in rhyme, thought he would try his own hand at it, and accordingly spoke thus—

“ With Fairy silk this petticoat,
They tell me, must be mended ;
And thus the girl on whom I doat
Will find her sorrows ended.
To get it mended therefore now
My one incessant care is ;
So please inform me where and how,
You dear delightful Fairies !”

And Joe felt rather proud of himself after this first attempt at rhyming, which was duly answered by the friendly voice—

“ Leave the sacred garment here ;
Leave it, youth, and never fear.
To the fight thyself devote,
Leave to us the petticoat !”

Thus reassured, Joe left the petticoat on the green, shouldered his oaken staff, and marched on. Through the wood he toiled up the gradual ascent, till, without

interruption, he came very near to the castle of the Ogres.

As he came up to the gate, he heard a great noise, and having put on his glove, he quietly entered the courtyard, in which he found the two Ogres, Grindbones and Smashman, playing at bowls with petrified men's heads; whilst their three remaining servants, whose names were Grimp, Grump, and Gruby, were in attendance, and the two Dwarfs seated on a low stone bench looking on. There, then, were all his enemies at once; but Joe knew that caution was necessary. When invisible, he could only use his staff, or his course might have been easier; but none of the three gifts could be used at the same time: moreover, he mistrusted Gandleperry, whose cunning was evidently superior to that of all the rest. He therefore remained quiet, silently turning over in his mind what was the best thing to do next, when, to his disgust, Grindbones presently turned round and said aloud—

“Now, you Dwarfs, it is time for you to go and tease Puss-cat Mew. Where's that fellow Juff? Man's eyes and cheeks! he is never here to the time!”

With a wily leer Gandleperry replied—

“He is out after that poor fool of a Mortal, whom he will probably entice here soon; but Jumper and I are enough to tease that conceited Fairy minx. I wish our power was great enough to allow us to touch her; wouldn't we tear her flesh for her, and make that pretty face rather different!”

And with a fearful scowl he and Jumper left the seat and entered the house.

Joe instantly perceived that this was his chance of discovering his darling. Keeping on his glove, he followed the two Dwarfs into the house, down a stone passage, till they came to a flight of stairs—at the top of which Gandleperry suddenly stopped, and exclaimed to his companion—

“Did you hear anything, Jumper? I thought I heard a step; and there’s an uncommon smell of Mortal here, too!”

“No,” replied Jumper, “I heard nothing; and as to a smell of Mortal, I should be surprised if there wasn’t, for don’t you remember how the alderman, whom the Ogres caught yesterday, was chased up and down by the servant Ogres to make him tender? Here it was they worried him at last, and I should think the place would smell for a week.”

Gandleperry made no reply, but taking a lucifer-box from a shelf in the wall, struck a light, and, with candle in hand, descended the steps, and Jumper after him. Joe cautiously followed, and counted thirty steps, at the bottom of which they came to a low door, which Gandleperry opened by means of a key which he took from Jumper, who carried it at his belt. They all three entered, and Joe could hardly restrain his passion at the sight which met his eyes. On a low chair, in the middle of a vaulted room, lighted only by a dim lamp fixed in the wall, sat Puss-cat Mew. She seemed only the wreck of her

former self. Her tortoiseshell skin was no longer bright and glossy, her eyes no longer sparkled with their old joyous, loving light; she sat with her head supported by one of her paws, and sorrow and suffering were written on her countenance. A tin can of cold water was by her side, and an untasted loaf with it.

"Now, prisoner," said Jumper, "how are you to-day, my minnikin Miss?"

Then Gandleperry seated himself cross-legged opposite her on the floor, put a thumb into each waistcoat-pocket, approached his face so near to her, that Joe longed to attack him, and with a malicious grin, leering up into her face, thus accosted her—

"Pettikin, dear, how is she this nice, bright day? Oh, how lovely it is in the forest! Birds are singing, the sun is shining, flowers are blossoming—oh, so delightful it is! And here is poor Pussy sitting all alone in a nasty damp dungeon! Where's her Joe now, eh? You little meek-faced beast!—you can't get out!—no, not a bit of it! And, I say, what do you think? Here's a bit of news for you! Joe's caught! Oh yes, he is! Such a go! Ain't the Ogres just pleased! Joe-giblets for soup! Joe's feet and ears cold for breakfast! Roast loin of Joe for dinner! Joe and onions for the servant Ogres, and Joe's head and brains for the dear little Dwarfs! And then Puss-cat Mew will have to marry the nice, kind, handsome old Ogre that beats all his wives till their

bones are broken and their flesh is tender, and then has them made into pies to take out for luncheon when he goes shooting! O you pet Puss-cat!—Miaw-aw-aw.”

And the Dwarf put out his tongue at the poor victim, and imitated the mewing of a cat. Joe was fearfully enraged, but he felt that everything depended upon his prudence, and he therefore restrained himself, and waited.

Puss-cat Mew made no answer to these taunts at first, but only sighed. As Gandleperry, however, continued, and Jumper chimed in with even coarser insults, she spoke at last in a soft voice and said,—

“You do well, wretched creatures, to abuse one who is permitted for a time to be in your power, but your own hour of sorrow and misfortune may be near, and then you will remember Puss-cat Mew.”

This remark had but little effect upon the Dwarfs, and they continued to tease and revile the poor Lady for half an hour, during which time Joe stood still near the door, grinding his teeth with vexation. It was, however, fortunate for him that he had waited, for an event now occurred, than which nothing could have served him better. The crafty Gandleperry had long been dissatisfied with his position in the Ogres’ castle with respect to the other two Dwarfs, whose presence deprived him of the large share of Mortal heads and brains which he desired, and who, moreover, were inclined to side together against the superiority over them which he claimed. He had

therefore long determined to get rid of one or other of them upon the first opportunity, and the time seemed to him to have now arrived. When they had tormented poor Puss-cat Mew till they could think of nothing else, Gandleperry told Jumper to go before him up the stairs, and he would fasten the door; and as the latter did so, Joe saw with horror that Gandleperry drew a sharp knife from his belt, and struck his brother Dwarf a fearful blow over the shoulder into the neck. With an unearthly yell, Jumper fell to the ground; but he never yelled again, for Gandleperry jumped on him and cut his throat in a moment, as if he had been a pig! He then dragged him back into the dungeon, and making a horrible face at Puss-cat Mew, said to her—

“Here is a nice companion for you, Pettikin; pray be kind to him till I have time to fetch him away or bury him! He won't make a noise or disturb you! Ta-ta!”

And he kissed his hand to the poor creature in fearful mockery! But his triumph was short. Joe now saw the opportunity he had so long waited for, and a tremendous blow upon the head stretched Gandleperry senseless and bleeding upon the body of his murdered mate, and avenged the insults he had heaped upon the unfortunate prisoner.

Joe drew off his glove in a moment, and with a purr of joy Puss-cat Mew rushed into his arms. They had, however, no time to talk or to think of happy

things. Five deadly enemies were alive, and there was no safety yet.

Puss-cat Mew told Joe that she had no power to help him now, and that he must judge and act for himself. "No one," she said, "would come near her dungeon again till late in the evening, when one or both of the chief Ogres, after their dinner, might probably come down to laugh at her."

Joe could not bear to leave her with the bodies of the Dwarfs, neither could he take her up where she would be seen by the Ogres ; he therefore locked the door of the dungeon, and left her at the bottom of the stairs till she should hear of him again, telling her at the same time to come up directly if she heard him call. Then, again putting on his glove, he ascended the stairs. In the dining-room, which was on the first floor, and a pleasant room enough, sat the two chief Giants, each on one side of a round table, with dishes and plates before them. Joe just peeped in, and then creeping down again, saw the three servant Ogres sitting sleepily over the fire in the servants' hall. He advanced very quietly, and, after a few moments, found that the lazy fellows were really all dozing. He therefore took off his glove, and, taking out his snuff-box, went behind the chair of one, and opening the box, held it so immediately under his nose, that its strength actually prevented his sneezing, and sent him to sleep more soundly than ever. Joe had previously stuffed his own nose quite full of the cotton-wool in which the

box had been wrapped ; and thus feeling secure from the effects of the snuff, he held the box under the nose of each of the servant Ogres until they were all buried in slumbers which would render them harmless for some time to come. Then Joe put on his glove again, and walked up to the dining-room, where the two chief Ogres were at dinner. They were very merry, for they were feasting off the alderman of whose fate Joe had lately heard, and who seemed to have been fat enough to have been Lord mayor. There was a smoking haunch of alderman upon the table, to which both the Ogres seemed to have paid great attention, and they were accompanying the meal with deep draughts of some strong spirit. Joe advanced slowly to the table, and stood for a short time watching the monsters.

"Flesh and brains!" said the elder of the two, "but this Mortal was fat and well-to-do. I wish all Mortals were as fat and juicy."

"Yes," replied the other ; "they would be choice morsels then, and not like that vile pedlar the other day, who was all skin and bone."

And so ran the discourse of the creatures upon their dreadful meal, until Joe sickened with disgust. Having eaten and drunk heartily, the Ogres threw themselves back in their chairs, extended their legs, and in a few moments snored loudly, making so hideous a noise that Joe could compare it to nothing but a hundred fat hogs rolled into one, and all grunting at the same time. When he saw them thus, Joe

boldly drew off his glove, and taking a full handful of the snuff in his hands, instantly flung it into the face and eyes, one after the other, of both his enemies. As so much more went into their eyes than up their noses, the effect was not to send them to sleep, but to half-blind them, and put them in a furious passion. Quick as lightning Joe had his glove on again, whilst the Giants, both jumping up at the same moment, overset the table with a tremendous crash, and roared for their servants, who, however, could not awake if they wished to, and therefore never came.

"Did you throw something at me, nephew?" asked old Grindbones.

"Certainly not," replied the young Ogre.

"Then the Fairies have played us some trick! What is it? Where are they? Confound this stuff!" said Grindbones, and he stamped violently on the floor, and roared again for Grimp, Grump, and Gruby. "Stay," said he; "man's marrowbones! I will know the cause of this!" and he walked through a door which led into a room close by, whilst the younger Ogre sank back into his chair, growling to himself, and, not having had so much snuff as his uncle, being rather more disposed for sleep; and having withal drank heavily of the spirits, he began to nod again.

But the old Ogre had gone to fetch something in which he had great trust. It was a tame Magpie, from whom nothing was invisible, and who would soon tell him if anything was wrong. He took her

out of her cage, and hastened back to the room where he had left his nephew. But no Magpie was needed to tell him what was going on. As soon as Smashman began to show signs of sleep, Joe, feeling that there was no time to lose, drew off his glove, drew out his steel dagger, and, stepping speedily but quietly behind his chair, plunged the weapon up to the hilt in his throat. The Ogre gave a loud sobbing sound, half screech, half speech, and as Joe plucked out the dagger, his head fell forward and the blood gushed from a fearful wound. It was at this moment that the old Ogre entered the room from the side door by which he had left it, and saw in a moment what had happened. In an instant he rushed upon Joe with a dreadful howl, but Joe sheathed his dagger and popt on his glove just in time to escape him, and made for the door. As he rushed towards it, however, the Magpie, seated on the Ogre's shoulder, shouted out to him—

“This way, Master, to the door that opens on to the stairs. I can see him,—quick! quick!” And so well did the old fellow follow her directions, that Joe only just got through the door in time, and dashed down stairs, calling at the top of his voice for Puss-cat Mew to follow him out of the castle. Down he rushed, out of the door, into the yard; but as ill-luck would have it, a nail in the doorpost caught his glove, which fell from his hand, and as he rushed from the yard the Ogre saw him, and, no longer wanting the eyes of the Magpie to help him, rushed furiously in

pursuit, making the forest re-echo with his hideous cries of rage.

If he had not eaten and drank so much, nothing could have saved Joe, since the monster could go twice as fast as he could; but the quantity of alderman and spirits which he had taken caused old Grindbones to go somewhat slower and less steadily than usual, and gave Joe a good chance for his life.

He rushed forward at the top of his speed in a straight line for the Fairy Green, the Ogre furiously blundering after him, and the Magpie flying by his side and chuckling with excitement as she encouraged her master. Joe saw the green and the spring before him, and strained every nerve to reach it. The enemy gained upon him at each stride, and actually stretched out his hand to seize him at the very instant that he stepped within the green space.

Here, however, occurred something which Joe had never thought of, but which the Giant, if he had not been mad with rage and drink, would probably have recollected. The spot, sacred to the Fairies and beloved by them, received a friendly Mortal kindly, and Joe hastened forward as usual to the spring. But the huge Ogre had no sooner advanced upon it for a couple of yards, than the whole space began to quiver and shake like a quicksand, and the monster found himself sinking in it at every step. He strove to turn and fly, but it was too late. In an instant, a myriad Fairy forms were dancing around him

with light laughs of derision. He struck at them in vain ; deeper and deeper he sank, till the soft earth had drawn him down, so that only the upper half of his body was visible. Then he uttered an awful yell, which scared every creature in the forest, and his struggles were tremendous ; but they only seemed to cause him to sink deeper. And as he slowly sank down, making the most horrible faces and contortions, the soft, sweet voice sang once more from the Fairy Spring—

“ See where the monster Ogre lies
At mercy of the Fairy race ;
In vain his bulky form he tries
To move across th’ enchanted space.
A mass of wickedness so great
No Fairy Green could e’er endure ;
And here the wretch must meet his fate,
And here his punishment is sure.
So happiness to all the wood
And all the Fairies shall accrue ;
His death shall work for wondrous good,
And triumph to our Puss-cat Mew ! ”

And as the voice sounded, the Giant still sank, and he threw up his arms in despair above his head ; and when only his waving arms and his head were seen, so that it was plain he could not escape and his end was certain, the cruel and wicked Magpie flew down and perched upon her master’s head, and began to have a peck at his eyes. But such ingratitude was not allowed, and when a Fairy came near to drive her away, the bird flew off chattering to a neighbouring

tree, in the branches of which was hid an Adder, who dealt her a mortal wound as she sat there abusing the Fairies for spoiling her fun.

And now there were only the head and neck and one hand of the Ogre to be seen above the ground ; and Joe was anxiously waiting and gazing, when, looking up, he perceived his own beloved Puss-cat Mew approaching from the forest, and drawing near to the green. At the same moment spoke the old voice in his ear—

“Mortal ! do thou lightly tread,
And, with dagger keen and true,
Take the monster Ogre's head
To the feet of Puss-cat Mew !”

Joe could not hesitate to obey the command given by one who had proved so true an adviser. He seized his dagger, and advancing lightly over the green, raised it in his hand, and was about to strike the wretched Grindbones, when all of a sudden the terrific sound of a fearful explosion rent the air, and, looking towards the hill on which the Ogres' castle had stood, he perceived stones and rockwork, earth and trees, filling the air, whilst the terrible noise deadened every other sound, and was succeeded by a dread stillness even more alarming.

What do you think had happened? The truth is, that Gandleperry had not been killed, but only stunned by the blow which Joe had given him. After a while, he had come to himself again, and sitting up, found himself in a very uncomfortable

position. There was Jumper's body unpleasantly close, and the dungeon-door fast locked, and after thinking for a little while, he began to feel pretty certain that the Fairies were at the bottom of it all. Puss-cat Mew was gone, and how to get out he did not know. However, groping about the floor, he came upon his lucifer-match box, which he had brought down with the candle, and, immediately striking a light, began to search every corner of the dungeon, to find some means of getting out. At last he perceived a low door in one corner of the room, and at the handle of this he tugged, and then he pushed as hard as he could against it; and at last it suddenly gave way, so that, candle in hand, he stumbled forward into another vault.

Now, many years before, when the Ogres had first taken possession of that castle, it had belonged to a band of robbers, whom the monsters had killed, eaten, or dispersed. These robbers had stored all their gunpowder in one of the vaults below the castle, and there it had been left; for gunpowder is not a thing which Ogres use, except occasionally to flavour their soup. In the course of time some of the casks which held the powder had decayed and burst, and so the vault was half full of loose gunpowder, strewn about over the floor.

Into this vault Gandleperry stumbled, and the candle which was in his hand fell on the powder. There was so much of it that the whole castle was blown to the skies in the explosion that followed.

The wretched Gandleperry was of course blown to atoms, and the three Ogres, Grimp, Grump, and Gruby, who were sleeping off the effects of Joe's snuff in the room above, flew all in different directions—heads, arms, and legs being torn off and driven through the air with the masses of wood and stone which were sent up.

In one minute no living thing remained in the castle of the Ogres, and the castle itself was one vast, blackened ruin! The dying Grindbones heard the noise, and a fearful groan which he gave seemed to show that he understood that it betokened the downfall of the power and pride of his race. That groan, however, was his last, for Joe hesitated no longer, but, in obedience to the Fairy's command, plunged his steel dagger into the monster's throat, and had just time to sever his head from his body before the latter disappeared for ever, swallowed up by the fatal quicksand of the Fairy Green. The ground, having closed over the Ogre's carcase, immediately resumed its former placid appearance. Joe hastened to meet Puss-cat Mew, and laid the head of her enemy at her feet. Then, leading her on to the green space, upon which she now came with him readily, they saw the spring bubbling up more merrily than ever, and the stream seemed to laugh and chuckle with joy as it darted on. And then, as they came close to the spring, once more the soft, clear voice spoke in sweet and happy accents—

"The hour is come : the foe is slain,
And Puss-cat Mew is free again ;
Again has Fortune blest the Right,
And Wrong has perished in the fight.
Go, happy Mortal, take the Bride
Who stands all blushing by your side,
And Heaven be merciful to you,
As you are kind to Puss-cat Mew !"

And, as the voice concluded, Puss-cat Mew lightly bounded forward and disappeared behind the spring. In one moment, however, she reappeared, but no longer in the shape of a cat, which she had lately worn. Clad in the same dress which she had on when he first saw her in mortal form at the iron bar, and with her embroidered petticoat mended and as good as new, Joe saw his own dear beautiful wife standing before him, whilst the Fairy Queen led her by the hand, and Fairy forms danced around in gay and festive merriment. Then the Queen addressed the happy Joe in these words—

"Joe Brown, you have borne your trials well, and right gallantly have you fought, and thus deserved the success which has attended your efforts. There is no longer any difficulty in leaving the forest ; the iron bar has perished with the Ogres and the Dwarfs, and Puss-cat Mew is able at once to resume her human form, and to become yours again. Take her, then, and remember the conditions on which alone you can keep her. Observe them carefully, and many years of happy life will be before you both. Bless you, my children !"

Then Joe and Puss-cat Mew knelt before the Fairy Queen, who solemnly blessed them ; and the Fairies sang sweet songs as the loving pair walked away ; and as they turned round to cast a lingering look of regret at the dear old Fairy Green and Spring, they saw the Fairy mother just mounting on a rainbow to have a last look at them as they left the forest !

Safely they reached the hill, and safely descended ; and you may fancy the delight of the old miller and his wife when they saw them enter the house again, and heard all the wonderful adventures that had happened to Joe.

I am sure you can guess the rest of the story ! The three years passed over without any accident. Puss-cat Mew took her milk regularly (which people should always do when they have any medicine, nice or nasty, to take), and everything went on as well as possible. They had sons who were strong, and daughters who were beautiful ; and, though nobody knows it, *for certain*, it is strongly suspected that the "Miller's Daughter," about whom Mr. Tennyson wrote such pretty poetry, was descended directly from our dear Puss-cat Mew.

The Ogres' castle became a well-known ruin, visited by many people, who wondered when it was built, and what it had been. Well, Stonehenge is a vast ruin, and no one knows what it was, or when it was built ; and if I should tell you that the Ogres' castle is Stonehenge, and that Stonehenge is the Ogres' castle, who is to contradict me ?

Now, children, go and find out all about Stonehenge directly ; but whether you agree with this part of the story or not, remember that you now know the true history of Puss-cat Mew ; and I am glad to say that, in spite of all their former trials and troubles, she and Joe Brown lived very happily together all the rest of their lives !

There ! that is all the White Cat told the Brown Kitten ; and you see how lucky it is that I understand the language of the animals !

THE UMBRELLA AND PARASOL ;

OR,

PRIDE SHALL HAVE A FALL.

THERE was once a poor Umbrella, very old, and with most of the silk torn off its whalebone, so that it looked quite tattered and shabby, and of course felt low and out of spirits. No more could it shield its master from the rain and hail, or keep from his head the scorching rays of the summer sun ; and so, like many a worn-out old servant, it was discarded ; and, being too fragile to be made use of as a walking-stick, was left to find its living in the best way it could.

One day it was leaning disconsolately against a pillar letter-box, when a smart young Parasol passed by in a lady's hand.

"Ha, ha !" sneered the Parasol, when it saw the poor fellow ; "I never saw such a sight in my life ! Why, what a seedy old thing of an Umbrella ! It isn't of the least use in the world ; and what a ridiculous object, to be sure, with its silk all torn off. I wonder the thing has the boldness to show itself in the

streets! Now, look at *me*! Here I am, spick and span, white one side and pink the other, as delicate and pretty a creature as you'd wish to see! Everybody looks at me and thinks how smart I am, whilst that poor wretch of an Umbrella is only fit for the out-house."

So the proud new Parasol tripped gaily on in a jaunty manner, and the poor old Umbrella sighed mournfully; for he remembered the days when he, too, was young and strong, and could face the weather with the best of them.

In a few minutes a cloud came over the face of the bright sun, and the wind rose quickly, and a great storm came up from the south. The boisterous south-west wind came hurrying on and bringing the heavy rain with it, and as it whistled along the streets, and caught up the dust and the pieces of paper and whirled them with it, it drove the people into the porches and houses, and cried out all the while in its cheery voice—

"Go home, good people, go home; seek shelter, seek shelter! I'm coming to give you a shower-bath."

So the policeman buttoned his coat close to him, and the smart footman, who was standing at the door to watch the carriages pass by, stepped back quickly into the hall; and the boy that was going with a message went faster and straighter than he ever did before in all his life, in order to get out of the rain. And the old Umbrella crouched against the pillar letter-box, and as he had no silk to resist the wind

and the rain, it seemed to blow softly on him on purpose, and to bathe his poor worn-out whalebone and shattered handle quite kindly and gently. Presently he looked up, and saw a young lady hurrying by, and oh, what was that in her hand? Drenched—soiled with spots of mud—its pink half washed out, and its white dingy and shabby—can that be the proud young Parasol? Yes, indeed it was: and as it passed the humble Umbrella it hung its tassel with shame, and hid its ivory handle in its mistress's sleeve for vexation. The shower had come on so suddenly that it had no time to be folded up. It had tried to resist the rain at first, but it was no use, and in a few minutes it had lost all the beauty of which it had been so foolishly proud, and could never in future be more than a second-best Parasol at the very most.

Now, many Umbrellas would have jeered at the poor creature, and shaken their whalebone at it in an insulting manner; but our worthy old friend did nothing of the sort. He remembered his own condition, and felt for the poor young thing, which, like himself, had suffered from misfortune. So he only looked after the Parasol, and shook his handle with a sigh of pity, as he thought within himself how very short a time anything bright and beautiful lasts in this world.

My children, never let us be proud of anything which we have, in such a spirit as to make us despise others. Never sneer at others, or say anything to hurt their feelings, seeing that we none of us know how

about him. It wasn't so *very* dry, either, but rather moist, and he could see no ball anywhere ; but all round the sides of the kind of cave in which he was there was a bright substance like crystal, which lighted up the place, and on the floor sat an enormous Toad, smoking a very bad cigar, and evidently thinking himself everybody. He turned upon Ernest directly, and cried out to him in an angry tone—

“You presumptuous fool, how dare you come down here?”

Now Ernest, having been carefully brought up, was well aware that no one loses anything by politeness. Far from being angry, therefore, he replied, with the lowest bow which circumstances enabled him to make—

“Presumptuous, sir, I may possibly be, but it can hardly be the act of a fool which has brought me into the presence of so noble and handsome a Toad as yourself.”

“Not so bad,” replied the Toad ; “I see you have been taught manners. But what do you want?”

“My ball, sir,” said Ernest ; when instantly a low silvery laugh echoed through the cave, and the Toad, after swelling till Ernest thought he must certainly burst, went into a fit of laughter, which rather puzzled the boy.

“Your ball !” at length shouted the Toad. “If you mean that india-rubber affair that came crashing down here some time ago, I should hope it was long since cut up into gaiters for the tame Mice ; for it was



Ernest and the Toad.



fit for nothing else, and they were beginning to want new leggings. But as for balls, you shall see such a ball as you've never seen up above Toad-land, if you only wait for a moment."

With that the Toad spat in the air, which was his way of ringing the bell, and immediately a door was thrown open behind him, and several hundred Toadstools came rushing in and stood on their heads all round him.

The Toad then marched solemnly through the door, and the Toadstools after him, two and two, till Ernest had counted about four hundred. Then he got tired of counting, and thought he might as well follow and see what they were all going to do. So he kicked aside several Toadstools that came in his way, and passed on through the door after the procession.

Presently they came to quite a large room, entirely lighted by Glowworms; and here were assembled a great number of Mice, some of whom had gaiters on, which appeared to Ernest to be made of some stuff suspiciously like india-rubber. He had no time, however, to think about it, for as they entered the room the band was striking up a merry tune, and the Mice were asking each other to dance, and forming sets of Lancers, just as people do in the world above.

"Will you dance in a sixteen set?" said the Toad to Ernest; but he was so confused that he hardly knew what to say: at last he stammered out—

"If you please, sir, shan't I stamp on somebody? I'm very much afraid I shall never be able to help it."

"That's *their* look-out," replied the Toad. "Now don't be a fool, but get a partner at once."

Ernest was dreadfully puzzled, for he didn't know whether he ought to ask a Mouse, a Toadstool, or the Toad itself to dance; but while he was doubting what to do, a delicate White Mouse came softly up to him and murmured in a soft but somewhat shrill voice—

"If you would please to dance with me, sir, in a quiet set of eight, I shall be *so* delighted!"

So Ernest bowed civilly, and, as he could not give his arm to the Mouse, he offered her his hand, upon which she sat till the set was formed and they began to dance. Ernest took great care, and all went well until the last figure, when the music went quick, and he was so terribly afraid of hurting somebody that he came to a dead stop, and sat down, as ill luck would have it, right on the top of a Toadstool, who squashed instantly.

His companions began to abuse Ernest violently, telling him that he was an awkward Fungus, and, in fact, no better than a mere Mushroom. But the White Mouse took his part, and explained that it was all a mistake; and as the squashed Toadstool was not by any means a popular person, he was soon forgotten.

Ernest now asked his partner if he should fetch her some lemonade or a glass of sherry, to which she mildly responded that she felt inclined for a crumb

or two of toasted cheese, if he knew where it was to be found. He looked right and left, and seeing a number of the Mice crowding up into one corner, justly guessed that the supper was there : so pushing his way along, with his partner in his hand, he soon discovered a table, on which toasted cheese formed a large part of the eatables. Having placed his partner on this table, he soon saw that she was so fully occupied that he might just as well amuse himself by looking about him. Accordingly, he walked back to the middle of the room, and perceived the Toad seated upon a Toadstool, and making facetious remarks upon everybody about him.

As soon as he saw Ernest, "Halloo, you upper-world boy," he cried ; "how do you like the ball?"

"Very much, sir," replied Ernest, respectfully ; upon which the Toad rejoined—

"But you must have had enough of it now—at least I know *I* have ; so come and feed the gold and silver Fish ;" and beckoning Ernest to follow him, he hopped off to a passage in one side of the room, down which he went for some little way, when there appeared more and more light ; and Ernest presently found himself in a pleasant garden, in which was a large round pond, full of gold and silver Fish. The Toad knew all these by their names, and they came at his call like dogs to their master. He then began to feed them, his method of doing which was rather peculiar : the Toadstools put crumbs on his back, and then he leaped into the water, and the Fish came

swimming round, and took the crumbs off as he told them.

"Come," said he to Ernest, "do as I do, young Worldling."

But Ernest said he was afraid of catching cold, and had rather stay where he was.

"Why *didn't* you stay where you were, then—up above," said the Toad; "if you come to Toad-land, you ought to do as Toads do: and as to catching cold, you can't do that here; *our* colds run so fast that nobody ever catches them, and if they do, they are not such fools as to keep them, as you human beings sometimes do, for weeks together."

Ernest bowed silently, for he feared to continue the argument, lest he might be obliged to feed the Fish in the very unpleasant manner adopted by the Toad. The latter, however, soon got tired of his amusement, and, leaping from the pond, told Ernest to come along with him, and hear the Toadstools sing. To this Ernest willingly consented; and the first Toadstool who was in attendance upon the Royal Toad immediately began, in a voice hoarse with emotion—

"Abroad in the morning to see the bold Toads
Squat silently down by the side of the roads,
With speckles so yellow and bright,
With their servants behind them, the marsh-loving Frogs,
Who hurry to follow, from ponds and from bogs,
And croak till the coming of night."

"There!" said the Toad, triumphantly, "you won't hear such a singer as *that* every day. What would you do with him, if you had him up above?"

"I think," quietly observed Ernest, "that as he seems so hoarse, I should give him a lozenge."

"Fool!" answered the Toad, angrily, "what would be the use of *that*, when he has got no mouth?"

"No more he has," said Ernest; "I quite forgot that."

"Think before you speak, then," said the Toad. And Ernest began wondering how a creature without a mouth could sing at all, and whether a Toadstool could properly be called a creature; and then he began to say, half aloud, some verses which he remembered to have heard his nurse sing to him:—

"'Tis the voice of the Toadstool, I heard him complain,
I came up in the night from a smart shower of rain;
As a worthless old Fungus, so he in his bed,
Is left, while the people pick Mushrooms instead."

But these unlucky words were hardly out of his mouth, when a chorus of Toadstool voices began abusing him in the most furious language, and the Toad himself flew into a violent passion.

"Frogs' legs and heads!" exclaimed he; "was ever person so insulted? A common Mushroom, that folks eat upon toast with ketchup, preferred to an elegant and ornamental Toadstool! Out upon you!—Worldling!—you tasteless monster!"

Ernest was rather confused at this, and could think of nothing better to say than that he had meant no harm, and that it was from love and admiration for Toadstools that people in the upper world forbore to eat them. This statement somewhat calmed the

offended followers of the Toad ; but a sulkiness seemed to pervade the party, until the Toad, who had cooled down quite suddenly, and appeared as friendly as ever, asked Ernest what he would like to do next. Wishing to make himself as pleasant as possible, the boy suggested a game of "leap-frog."

"Leap-toad, I suppose you mean," grumbled the Toad ; "but you seem determined to call everything by its wrong name to-day :—but you shall have what you want." And ringing the bell again in his usual manner, he directed the Toadstools to fetch in the leapers ; upon which several of them vanished, and soon returned, ushering in a large number of small Toads, who began dancing and leaping about in every direction.

"But that isn't what I meant," said Ernest ; "don't you know how to play the real game of leap-frog—I mean leap-toad—down here ? One of you stands still and bends forward, and another jumps over him—like this." And Ernest imitated the manner in which one boy makes a back and another jumps over it at leap-frog.

"Don't come down here to teach your betters," shouted the Frog ; "that may be upper-world leap-toad, but this is Toad-land leap-toad. We ought to know best, being regular Toads ; and if you don't like it, you may lump it ;" and so saying, he sat down again and didn't speak another word for several minutes, during which time Ernest watched the Toads skipping about as fast as they could, till, at a

signal from the old Toad, they suddenly ranged themselves in a line against the side of the room, and remained perfectly silent and motionless.

"Now," said the Toad, "you shall see an illumination;" and at the word of command each of the leaping Toads drew from his pocket a lucifer-match, lighted it by striking it against the wall, and stuck it into his mouth. This produced a curious effect, and the Toad appeared highly delighted at it, keeping the leapers there till the matches had burnt so low that their eyes began to wink, and they trembled visibly; then, at a wave of his cigar, they all got rid of their matches as quickly as they could, and at a second signal disappeared down the passage out of which they had come.

Ernest now began to recollect that, with all these amusements, he was no nearer getting his ball, and therefore he politely remarked to the Toad that he should be much obliged if he would tell him where it was to be found.

"Drat your ball!" angrily answered the Toad; "it's dead—it's burst—it's changed into a Mouse—anything you please, only don't bother, but be contented."

"But I would go to the end of the world to get my ball," said Ernest, mournfully.

"Yes, you stupid world-child," remarked the Toad, "and tumble off when you'd got there, as a friend of mine once did, and fell down, and down, till he turned into a star, poor fool, and has stuck there, shining like an idiot of a Glowworm ever since. I should have

thought you had had enough of tumbling by this time ; but if you really want your ball, you must tumble again."

So saying, the Toad fiercely stamped his foot upon the ground, at the same time taking his eyes out of his head, throwing them up to the ceiling, and catching them again as cleverly as an Indian juggler ; after which he replaced them carefully, but took care to put the right eye where the left one was before, and the left in the place of the right. As soon as he had done this, he winked in the most frightful manner, and stamped upon the ground again. Immediately Ernest felt the floor giving way beneath him, and down he sunk, so quickly, that he could not even try to save himself, and all he heard was the voice of the Toad croaking, more and more faintly as he got further and further off—

"Go to the end of the world, then, and see how you like it!"

Somehow or other Ernest found this kind of sinking a remarkably easy way of travelling ; he went so softly and smoothly that he did not feel the least uncomfortable or giddy ; and though he seemed to be passing now through clay, now chalk, and now through something so black that he thought it must be coal, nothing seemed to come off on his jacket, and when he was brought up with a sudden jerk, he was as clean and comfortable, and just as self-composed, as if he had been all the time in his father's garden at home.

He shook himself thoroughly, to be sure that he

was awake, and then looked around. Where in the world—or out of the world—was he? On the brink of an enormous precipice, to look over which made him giddy at once; and he felt sure, without being told, that he had really got to the end of the world.

Giddy as he was, he still determined that he must and would peep over to see what there was to be seen; and accordingly he lay down flat on his stomach and looked over. He saw lights at different distances from each other, which he took to be stars; some so large and glaring that they made him wink and shut his eyes when he tried to look at them, others paler and more dim, as if further off. And then he saw, floating all round him in every direction, a quantity of clouds,—at least they looked like clouds at first; but each one had a face, and an uncomfortable sort of anxious expression seemed to rest on every countenance, as it blew first one way and then another, like leaves at the corner of the street which the wind whirls about and catches up and drives in different directions. Still, each Cloud-face seemed to be trying to go its own way, and never to be quite satisfied whichever way it was going.

"What on earth are these?" said Ernest to himself.

"On earth, my child," said a voice near him, "they were undecided people, who spent their time in making and unmaking all their plans, small and great, and could never settle what was best to be done. So now, having left the earth, they are doomed to pursue the same course which they did

in life, and are making up their minds—or trying to do it—as you see. The end of the world makes no difference to them, and it will probably be centuries before their minds are finally made up, until which event they blow about here as undecided as ever.”

Ernest started at the sound of this voice, and turning round his head as well as he could, saw to his surprise a venerable Oyster close to him, whose large beard betokened his extreme age. He was open, or else of course Ernest could not have seen his beard; and the sight of him would have reminded the boy at once of vinegar and thin slices of brown bread and butter, had not his voice so surprised him that he could think of nothing else. It was a soft, low voice, sweet to the ear, and not unlike the gentle pattering of the rain against the window when the wind blows it up from the south-west. And Ernest, in spite of his surprise at hearing the Oyster speak, felt a great respect for him at once, and addressed him with the reverence due from youth to age.

“Pray, sir,” asked he in a humble tone, “is this the end of the world?”

“Shut me tight if I know,” replied the Oyster; “but by all accounts I believe it is, and I wouldn’t go too near the edge, if I was you.”

“Thank you, sir,” replied Ernest; and then, after a moment’s hesitation, “How long have you been here, and how did you come?”

“I was born here,” said the Oyster, “about a thousand years ago, more or less; but it is very

impertinent to ask questions. I thought that nobody did *that*, except the commoner sort of Mussels, or the discarded shell of an old Crab. Pray don't get into such habits."

"But," remarked Ernest, "I am very anxious to find my ball, and I want to know all about the strange places I come to in looking for it."

"Then," solemnly replied the Oyster, "you had better ask somebody else."

"But there *is* nobody else," said Ernest.

"Ah!" sighed the Oyster, "no more there is. I had never thought of *that*; but, you know, one can't go on talking for ever." And without another word he suddenly shut, nor would he open again for anything that Ernest could say.

This was decidedly unpleasant; the more especially as the place on which Ernest was lying was a kind of ledge, with the precipice in front and a wall of chalk behind, and on this ledge he could see nothing but the Oyster. However, he was determined not to be annoyed by trifles: so he crept along the ledge a little way, and presently came to a turning which led away from the precipice right into the chalk. He went down this a few yards, when he suddenly heard a laugh, and looking up saw a little old Man sitting on a shelf above his head. He couldn't have been more than two feet high, and he had a hooked nose, rather like Punch, and a merry eye, and a clay pipe in his mouth, which he had taken out to laugh.

"I hope I don't intrude, sir," said Ernest.

"By no means," answered the little Man ; " I am very glad to see you. I am the Man in the Moon, and of course I have come down before my time ; and as to asking my way to Norwich, it is quite useless, for I find the people there are frightened at my very name just now ; so I have sauntered down here to be out of the way for a time."

"And can you get back again when you please, sir ?" said Ernest.

"To be sure I can," replied the little Man, "but I don't want to go just yet. I like to be on the shelf for a little while, now and then ; it rests me. And there is a good look-out up here, too. Come up and try !" So saying, he held out his hand to Ernest, and helped him up to the shelf.

There, indeed, was the strangest sight you ever saw. A number of windows, cut in the chalk, enabled you to look out over the whole country around the end of the world, and out of each window you had quite a different view.

Ernest looked through the first one, and saw a number of people pushing and panting with exertion, trying to get through a door which was shut, and which no effort of theirs could force open. They seemed dreadfully disappointed, and their faces were yards long with vexation.

"Who are those ?" asked Ernest.

"Oh !" said the Man in the Moon, "those are the people who always declared there was no other world than the one they lived in : so now that they have

got to the end of it, they have been taken at their word. They have done with one world, and no other will have anything to say to them ; so there they are, pushing and struggling on, unable to go backward or forward."

Ernest looked, and looked again ; and then, as it was rather a sad sight, he moved a little way along the shelf and looked through another window. There he saw a number of things like very large leaves of trees, tossing up and down in inextricable confusion, sometimes blown up high as if by the wind, and sometimes sinking down again, each with a curious face to it, on which appeared a restless and unhappy expression.

"Whatever are these ?" said Ernest.

"These are Senses," said his companion. "When people up above have lost their senses, they generally blow down here, where they perhaps do less harm than if they had remained with their former owners. They are always, however, trying to get back again ; but there is so much nonsense in the world that they hardly ever do so, and not one person out of a hundred in the world gets his senses back when he once loses them, as his brain is instantly stuffed full of nonsense, so that there would be no room for them if they *did* get back."

Ernest turned away and looked through another window, and saw a quantity of birds, of every sort and description, flying about all over the place.

"Ah !" said his friend, "these are the rotten eggs.

Don't suppose that a rotten egg in a nest means that there was no bird belonging to it. Only, instead of hatching like a common bird, the rotten-egg birds fly off here to the end of the world, and there, you see, is a regular comfortable place provided for them."

Ernest thought this a very fair arrangement; for why should one egg fare better than another?

He moved on, however, and, looking through another window, saw a number of men walking up and down on a platform, from which they could not move, whilst opposite them were placed a number of large boards, with various inscriptions in large blue and gold and red letters.

"What does this mean?" asked the boy.

"These," said the Man in the Moon, "are railway directors, who have bored people so terribly, when waiting for their trains, by having great staring advertisements put up at their railway stations, that now, whilst *they* are waiting at the end of the world, they are condemned to stay on a platform and have nothing to read but these same advertisements. Look at that stout old gentleman with 'Thorley's Food for Cattle' before him, and that one next him looking up at 'Horniman's Tea.' I warrant they'll never allow such things again if they should ever be directors of an underground railway, or an atmospheric company."

Ernest thought this was all very curious, and rather puzzling; so he didn't look through any more of the

windows ; but, turning to his pleasant friend, told him the reason why he had come to the end of the world, and asked him where he thought the ball was to be found.

"Found!" said the Man in the Moon ; "why, don't you know that india-rubber balls always rebound? Of course, as soon as your ball got to the bottom of the well and struck the ground, it bounded up again as fast as it could, and the wonder is that it didn't strike you in the face as you came down. Your ball is probably waiting for you at the place where you were playing with it when you lost it."

"Dear me!" said Ernest, "I never thought of that. But how am I to get up again? I can't rebound, you know."

"Of course not," replied his friend ; "but there is nothing easier in the world than to do what you wish. I am going back myself directly, and will show you all about it in a minute."

Accordingly, he took his pipe in his left hand, and with the stem of it touched a spring in the chalk rock, when a door immediately opened and disclosed a large cupboard, in which were several enormous tumblers.

"Now," said the Man in the Moon, "have you ever taken a saline draught?"

"Yes," replied Ernest ; "you mean the thing that fizzes up when you put water on the powder."

"Exactly so," rejoined his friend ; "but I dare say you never *were* a saline draught, were you?"

Ernest stared, and said he certainly never had been yet ; but having long ceased to be surprised at anything, he was quite ready to believe that he might become a draught, or a pill, or even a dose of rhubarb and magnesia, at any moment. The Man in the Moon told him that he must do exactly as he saw *him* do ; and he then took two small powders, wrapped in blue paper, out of his waistcoat-pocket, and shook one of them into each of two tumblers, which he took out and placed upon the shelf. He then deliberately got into one of the tumblers, and told Ernest to get into the other ; after which he took a bottle from the cupboard, which was labelled Double X, meaning, no doubt, that it was a very extraordinary mixture. And so it was ; for the Man in the Moon had no sooner poured half of it into Ernest's tumbler and half of it into his own, than they both began bubbling and fizzing like sodawater very much "up." Very much "up" they soon were ; for the mixture, carrying them with it, fizzed right up out of the tumblers and through the earth. Everything seemed to give way before them, or else they had hit upon the same passage as that down which Ernest had come, or one very like it. Up, up they went, past coal, and clay, and chalk, as comfortably and as easily as possible ; and the last thing Ernest remembered was seeing the Man in the Moon nodding, and smiling, and kissing his hand to him, as he mounted far above him. Then Ernest lifted up his head, opened his eyes wide, and looked around. Where was he ? Why, under the

mulberry trees that grew near the well in his own father's garden! The cool air was blowing on his face, and the pleasant sunlight was shining down upon him, and there was a gentle rustling of the mulberry leaves above his head, and he sat up and rubbed his eyes in astonishment. Close to him, on the ground, uncut and unhurt, dry and safe, was his india-rubber ball.

"Then the Toad told a story," cried he, "and the tame Mice have *not* got new leggings!"

"New leggings, indeed!" said a voice near him. "What's all that nonsense about mice and leggings? I think we poor maids shall be wanting new legs soon if we have to run about after you children so long. Why, Master Ernest, I've been hunting for you this half-hour. There have your sisters gone in to tea, and Miss Jones has been asking after you, and here you are fast asleep under the mulberry trees!—I declare it's enough to worret one to death; and all because of that apple-pie and custard you ate such a lot of at dinner, I'll be bound! *Do* come along, there's a good boy."

So Ernest got up and looked the maid straight in the face, and said—

"Jane, were you ever down a well?"

"Down a well, Master Ernest!—no, to be sure not; who ever heard of such a thing? But I shall be up a tree if I don't bring you in to Miss Jones pretty soon!"

Ernest said no more, but went quietly with the

maid, who told his sisters and their governess that he had been asleep under the mulberry trees all the afternoon. You and I know better, but it does not always do to tell all one knows out aloud. But, as the Toad, and the Oyster, and the Man in the Moon all knew too, it is no wonder that the real truth came out in spite of Ernest's silence ; and in fact, if one of them hadn't told me, *I* should never have known all the wonderful things that I have been telling you, for I don't believe the India-rubber Ball would ever have said a word about it !

THE DAISY AND THE LAMB.

THERE was once a house, far away in the country, with a nice little lawn before it, round which ran a deep ditch, and over the ditch you crossed a broad plank into the pleasant meadows beyond, where the sheep and lambs lived. They were never allowed to come on the lawn, for fear they should get on the flower-beds and spoil the gravel-walks, that the gardener was so particular about and kept so neat and clean. On the lawn itself there was nothing but grass, in which a few dandelions and daisies were the only flowers to be seen.

One little Daisy there was, about the middle of the lawn, which was as cheery and happy a little flower as ever you saw. There she nestled on her grassy bed, as comfortable as a Daisy need be; and whether it was fine or rainy weather, she was always satisfied. When the rain came, she would say, "Now I'm going to have my jolly shower-bath;" and when the sun shone out, she would think, "Here comes my nice fire, to dry me and make me warm and cosy."

Whatever happened to this little Daisy, she was always happy and contented.

One day when the lambs were very frisky, one, which was bolder than the rest, ventured on the plank which lay across the ditch. He crept softly over it till he got to the lawn; then he pushed his nose against the little gate which was at the end of the plank, and, as this was not fastened, it came open, and he walked in upon the lawn as if it was all his own.

Oh, that was a fine time for the little Lamb! He ate the sweet young grass, and he nibbled off the heads of a dandelion or two, and in fact he made himself just as happy as a schoolboy with his Christmas pudding.

On he strolled, step by step, very slowly, towards the middle of the lawn, till at last he came to the place where our little Daisy was growing. He walked up to her without a bleat, and was just going to bite off her head, when she said, in a trembling voice—

“Oh, Mr. Lamb, dear Mr. Lamb, please don’t tear me away from my happy home! I am so happy and contented here; please spare me, for I never did *you* any harm.”

Now the Lamb started back when he first heard the Daisy speak, for he wasn’t used to that kind of thing at all; and as his mother had never taught him the language of flowers, I don’t think he would have understood what the poor little Daisy said, if he had

not been rather a clever Lamb ; and besides, no doubt he guessed from the Daisy's frightened appearance what she was asking, and what she wanted. So he looked at the Daisy, and he looked round the lawn, and after thinking a minute, he replied—

“Well, Miss Daisy, who'd have thought of this? Lambs *do* eat Daisies, you know, and I must say that you seem to be a very nice one ; but I don't wish to do anything unhandsome. Have you any friend who would say a good word for you?”

“Oh yes, Mr. Lamb,” answered the Daisy ; “I am sure that the Swallow will do so directly, if you ask him.”

So the Lamb turned round to the Swallow, and said to him—

“Come, you skimming fellow, what do you know of this Daisy?”

“You are not very polite,” said the Swallow ; “and if I couldn't skim faster than you can run, I shouldn't catch many flies for my supper. But I am always glad to say a kind word for a friend, and I have a high opinion of that little Daisy. She is as quiet and modest a little flower as you'd see in a week together ; and when the weather is moist, and I flit quite close to the ground after those tiresome insects, she often has a little raindrop or two in her white-rimmed cup with the golden lining, so that I can cool my wing as I skim by her in my flight. Don't hurt the Daisy, Lamb, there's a good fellow !”

Now the Lamb did not much like being called a

"good fellow" by a mere bird, and especially such a small one; so he turned sharply round upon the Daisy, and asked her, with somewhat of a haughty bleat—

"Have you no one else to speak for you, Daisy?"

"I think," replied the Daisy, "that the Nightingale would say something."

"Where is the Nightingale?" said the Lamb; and there came a soft, sweet sound floating on the air from the wood hard by, and a quiet little brown bird just peeped out, and sang rather than spoke its answer to the Lamb—

"Oh yes, I will say a word for the little Daisy. In the soft spring evenings, when the sun has left off shining, and the calm, still night comes with its solemn darkness, and the moon and the stars only give light enough to let us see the shadows, then is my singing time. All the people are gone to bed, and I love to hop from bough to bough near to the ground, and I sing to the sweet pale moonlight and the solemn silence. And as I pass along the side of the lawn, I see the dear little Daisy nestling down, and turning her innocent face up as if she was listening to every note of my plaintive song; and I always stay for a while on the branches near her, and she seems like a little companion to me in my evening ramble. Spare the Daisy, little Lamb!"

And the Nightingale hopped again into the dark wood, for she did not like the broad staring light

of day, and would not have ventured out so far if she had not had a true and tender heart that made her bold to speak for her friend.

Then said the Lamb, with a softened bleat (for his heart was touched by the sweet music of the Nightingale's notes)—

"Well, little Daisy, have you any one else to plead your cause?"

"I am sure," replied the Daisy, "that the Robin is a true friend."

"Where, then, is the Robin?" rejoined the Lamb; and he looked round, and there, upon the stone steps opposite the front door, stood the Robin as bold as brass. He had on his light-brown coat and his brightest red waistcoat, and his black eye twinkled roguishly as he answered the Lamb.

"Here am I, Mr. Lamb," said he, "right glad to say a word for my friend the Daisy. Every morning, when the sun begins to drive away the darkness and light up the world with his cheerful rays, I come out here on the steps, or on to the lawn, and hop up upon some bough hard by, and there I give out my morning carol of joy and praise to the good God who has made the world so beautiful and me so happy. And there I see the little Daisy, always fresh and always cheerful; and when the children come out and throw their crumbs upon the lawn for my breakfast, I hop round the Daisy, and she seems to point with her little white fingers to where the crumbs are lying, and to enjoy seeing me breakfasting by her side. She

is a good little, sociable thing, and I hope you won't hurt her."

The Lamb listened to what the Robin had said with great attention; but he felt rather hungry still, and the mention of breakfast made him think that the Daisy would be very nice with a little salad of grass; so he could not quite make up his mind to spare her as the birds asked him.

"Are these all your friends?" again he asked of the trembling flower.

"Oh no!" she said, "I have many more. Perhaps the Blackbird"—and the words were scarcely out of her mouth when a fine large Blackbird, with a bright yellow beak and a laughing eye, came bursting out of a laurel bush in such a hurry, that he startled the Lamb dreadfully, and made him jump three feet up in the air, which always annoys lambs very much, and might have made him very angry, only he was so surprised at the turn things had taken that he wanted to hear the end of it.

The Blackbird chuckled loudly as he flew across the lawn, only stopping just to kiss the Daisy as he passed by, and give a peck to an impertinent-looking Dandelion, who seemed to be enjoying the Daisy's fright. He flew up upon a bough of a neighbouring tree, and sang out in his loudest and clearest voice—

"What! my little Daisy friend? I wouldn't have her hurt for the world. Why, when I am hopping round her, looking out for worms on the lawn, she has always a kind look for me. And then, when

the weather gets bright and mild, and my mate is sitting hard on our eggs, I perch myself on the highest branch I can find near the nest, and I sing my best and prettiest songs to cheer the poor soul while she is there alone; and whilst I sing I see the Daisy on the lawn, and she seems to be ever looking up and enjoying my melody; so that I feel her quite a companion. Pray don't think of hurting such an innocent little creature."

"But," said the Lamb, with a cunning beyond his years, "if you take the worms to eat, why not I the Daisy? Little flower, have you no one else on your side?"

And before the Daisy could answer, out of one of the tall fir-trees that skirted the shrubbery flew a pretty white Woodpigeon; and he circled the lawn twice in his flight, high up in the air, and then he perched in the nearest fir-tree, and began to coo gently to the Lamb in his most soothing tones.

"Lamb," cooed he, "I know the Daisy well, and I love her much. In the hot summer weather my mate and I sit silently in the thick trees around the shrubbery, or in the woods, only now and then cooing softly to each other, and sometimes flapping heavily across from one tree to another, and waiting till the sun grows less hot, when we fly down to the yellow corn-fields. And when the winter comes on, and other pigeons join us, we roam about high up in the air to see that all is safe, and then down we swoop upon the turnip-fields for our food. But all the year

round we come back to roost in the tall firs, and as we cross the lawn we look down and see the little Daisy, always cheerful and pleasant to the eye; and as my mate and I coo to one another in the thick trees, we often talk about the flowers, and say how good and humble-minded a little thing the Daisy is, and how glad we are to see her on the pretty lawn. Pray spare the Daisy, kind Lamb!"

Then the Lamb turned to the Daisy again, and I don't know what he was going to say to her; for before he could say anything, a large White Owl came out of a hollow tree that stood in the shrubbery, and gave such a hoot, that the Lamb was even more startled than he had been by the Blackbird.

"Are you talking about the Daisy?" said the Owl. "Bother this sun! how unpleasant it is to have to come out of one's tree before he is gone to bed, and how tiresome you are to be making such a noise when all sensible people are blinking and winking and going to sleep! But you don't really think of hurting the Daisy, you Lamb? Why, when I go out at night and sail slowly and silently along the ground after those silly mice, it is quite a pleasure to see the Daisy's honest little face peering up from the ground, and I feel as if she was quite an old friend of mine; so I wouldn't have her hurt for the world. Besides, I must say, Mr. Lamb——"

No one ever knew what the Owl thought he must say, for at that moment the Blackbird, who was of a very jealous temperament as regarded owls, gave a

great screech at him, which was answered by another Blackbird; and a Jay from the neighbouring wood joined in, with a hoarse, harsh cry of disgust. The Owl knew there would be a row in another minute, and there is nothing owls hate so much as a row in the daytime; so he turned without a word to his hollow tree, and did not attempt to utter another syllable.

And at that moment a Boy, who had heard the noise of the Jay, threw open the house door suddenly and came out on the steps, and as soon as he saw the Lamb, he shouted out aloud—

“Oh! there’s a Lamb on the lawn!—a Lamb on the lawn!”

And he called the little Dog (who ought to have driven away the Lamb before, only he had stolen a bone that morning, and was quietly gnawing it in the kitchen-yard instead of attending to his duty), and they ran after the Lamb; and off he rushed in a great fright, and forgot all about the little Daisy.

The Boy presently opened the gate, and chased the Lamb round the lawn till he ran out of the gate and over the plank back to his own fields.

Then the Boy went to moisten his mouth with some cherries out of the big cherry-tree, and the Daisy lifted up its little head, and when it saw that the Lamb was gone, and it was quite safe, its little heart was filled with joy; and all the birds came round and sang their songs of pleasure, and kissed the little Daisy with their beaks, so kindly and so softly, and

rejoiced with her that she had escaped the jaws of the hungry Lamb !

So you see what a good thing it is to have good friends to speak for you and sympathise with you when you are in trouble ; and the best way to make such friends is to be kind and loving to others, and to lead a harmless, contented life, like the little Daisy, making yourself happy with the blessings which the good God has given you, and always taking interest in the welfare and happiness of others.

THE FAIRY POOL.

THERE were two little children who lived on the shore of the sea, and could always hear the waves when they beat against the beach, as if they were longing to bound over it and come leaping up into the fresh green country beyond. When the wind was high, the pretty white foam rode on the crest of the waves, and they roared louder, and jumped more wildly on to the beach, and dashed the spray into the face of any one who came down near the shore, and seemed to fret and fume because they could not get any further. And when the wind fell, oh, how quiet and calm the sea looked!—no more angry, roaring waves, but a gentle ripple on the face of the ocean, like the placid beating of the heart of a little child asleep; and, like its easy, quiet breathing, came a low, little steady murmur of the tiny waves, creeping on to the beach. But the two little children, though they were fond of playing down on the flat shore, were still more fond of playing amid the cliffs and high rocks that came close down to the sea. There they would play, oh, so happily! for hours together,

and build little houses of shells and bits of rock, and climb down as near the sea as they could, and sit on the ledges of the rocks, peeping down into the clear blue pools of salt water, which the sea left behind it after the tide had come up and filled the hollow places in the rocks, and had gone back again at low water.

And there was one pool which the children always called the Fairy Pool. It was so wonderfully beautiful! The water was so clear that, although it was very deep, you could see quite to the bottom, and all over it, and there were quantities of lovely shells in the Pool, and little fish that darted about from one side to the other; and the rocks at the bottom looked so bright and beautiful, that the children used to talk to themselves, and say that the Fairies must be very good housemaids to keep their floor so smart and clean, and to make everything look so neat and pleasant.

They were little, loving children, these two; very fond of each other, and each liking to give up to the other, and trying to make each other happy; and one of their great pleasures was to go and look at their dear Fairy Pool together, and count how many shells there were, because the old shells were often washed away by the tide, which brought in new shells instead, and left them in the Pool.

But one day it happened that one of these two little children was not good. She forgot that it is naughty to be selfish and thoughtless about others.

She would not give up to her sister, but was cross and unkind to her ; and then she felt unhappy, for people are never happy when they are unkind. So she went out all alone to the rocks, and sat down near the Fairy Pool, and felt very miserable. Then she crept softly up to the Pool, and looked down into the water below, and started back directly in fright and surprise.

Instead of the clear blue water and the beautiful shells, she saw that the water was all muddy and thick, so that she could hardly see down to the bottom of the Pool, and when she strained her eyes till she *did* see, there was a nasty, ugly, great Snake, that lay coiled up, and staring at her with its glassy, green eyes.

Then the child grew frightened, and drew back from the Pool, and sat down upon the rocks, and thought for a little while in silence. Presently she burst into tears, and sobbed as if she was quite heart-broken. She had been there so often in the happy days that were past, playing merrily with her sister, without a care or thought of sorrow ; and now all was changed !—the day seemed dull, the water in the Pool was thick, and everything was ugly instead of beautiful.

But as she sobbed as though her little heart would break, she heard a little noise near her, and, looking up, she saw a dear, wee little Lady, not bigger than the doll with the wax face, and pink cheeks, and blue eyes, that the children stop to look at in the toy-shop

window. Oh! but she was much more beautiful than any doll! She was dressed all in green, with a little cloak of the loveliest sea-weed, and an elegant veil, made of the most delicate scales of the prettiest fish, fastened at the back of her head by the most superb pearl brooch you ever saw; and through the veil you could see her magnificent long hair glistening with wet, as if she had just come up out of the sea.

"Little girl, little girl," said she, "are you sad because the Pool is muddy, and you can no longer see the pretty shells? That is because you have not been kind, and good, and loving to your sister; for it is only loving little children who are allowed to see the clear water in the Pool."

And the little girl sobbed more loudly still, and said—

"Oh yes; I am sorry because I cannot see the pretty shells; but I am still more sorry because I have not been kind to my darling sister."

Then the Lady smiled upon the child, and said to her—

"If you are sorry, you need not be sorry long; see, here is your sister coming; run to meet her, and be loving again before you look into the Pool. I am the Queen of the Fairy Pool, and I love to see children there; only they must be loving children."

Then the child turned round, and she saw her sister coming along, slowly and sorrowfully; for she

was hurt and unhappy at her sister's coldness. And the child ran down to meet her, and threw her arms round her neck, and kissed her, and they were soon friends again. Then they walked up to the Pool, and there was the little Green Lady, sitting on the rock ; and when she saw the children, she called them to her, and said—

“ Now, my darlings, look into the Pool.”

And they looked ; and there was no Snake there now, but the water was clear as crystal again ; and once more they saw all the pretty shells, and the little fish, and the smooth rocks ; and their hearts were light and happy again.

And the little Fairy Queen smiled upon the children, and told them always to love and be fond of each other, for that to love each other was the best way to teach them to love the good God who had given them to each other, and to make them contented and thankful for all the blessings He had given them. And the Queen kissed her hand to the children, and disappeared among the rocks that surrounded the Fairy Pool.

My children, that clear Pool is like your hearts ; when God looks into them, and sees them full of innocent thoughts, and of love to each other and to Him, He is pleased, and He will love and bless you. But if you are unkind to each other, and let naughty thoughts, and pride, and selfishness creep into your hearts, there is nothing that can prevent God from seeing just the same ; but these things, to His pure

eyes, are like the ugly Snake in the Fairy Pool, and they grieve the good God, and make Him turn away His face and be vexed with you. So pray to Him that your hearts may be purified by His Holy Spirit, so that they may be clear and beautiful in His sight, like the water in the Fairy Pool!

THE ANGELS' WHISPER.

THERE was once a little girl, who was walking out in the shady wood near her home, when she looked up into a thorn-tree, and there she saw a pigeon's nest, with one white egg in it. The egg was so round, so smooth, so beautifully white, that she longed to take it home and have it for her own, and was just going to do so, when she saw the pretty White Pigeon come flying round and round her with a sorrowful look. And it said, in its own soft cooing way—

“Little girl, dear little girl, leave me my one egg ; oh ! leave me my dear little egg ! for it is my only one, and my heart will break if my tender mate comes back and finds it gone.”

So the little girl looked first at the egg and then at the Pigeon, and she gave a little sigh (for she wanted the egg very much), and then she put it quietly back into the nest and walked slowly home.

Not long after, this little girl's only brother fell very ill. No doctor could cure him, and every one thought he must die ; so the little girl was very unhappy, and the long nights passed so slowly and sadly, as she watched by the bedside, and the large

tears ran down her little cheeks again and again, till her little face grew sadly thin and wan, and she could think of nothing else but her dear little brother, who lay there, with his young life ebbing slowly away.

One evening, as she was sitting in his room, in the soft spring-time, with the window open so that the fresh air might come in and blow upon his poor pale face, she heard a little fluttering noise near her, and a beautiful White Pigeon came and settled on the window-sill close to her. And when she lifted up her head, it put its pretty head against her soft cheek and began to coo to her, so softly and gently, that it seemed to soothe her sorrow. Presently it said (all in the birds' language, you know,—but somehow or other the little girl quite understood every word)—

“ Little girl, dear little girl, I am the Pigeon whose egg you spared that day when you found my nest and I have come to tell you that last night, whilst I was resting in the fir-groves, I heard the Holy Angels whispering in the soft, still air, and they said how that the Great Spirit, who is Lord of everything in heaven and earth, is always looking down upon His world, and taking note of all that goes on ; and how He loves to see people gentle and kind and loving ; and never lets a kind action go without its reward, either here or in some other world beyond. And they said how that because you were so kind and tender-hearted, and left me my one little egg, He would leave you your only little brother now, and he should not die ! ”

Then the Pigeon cooed softly again, and the little girl kissed it gently, and it flew away into the silent night. And she turned to the bed, and saw that her little brother was sleeping for the first time for many days, calmly and peacefully, with a sweet smile upon his face, as if the Angels had been whispering to him too.

Perhaps it was so; but, at all events, from that moment he began to get well, and was soon quite strong again! And the little girl grew up to be a woman, and to have children of her own; and she often told them this pretty story, and never, never could she forget the sweet White Pigeon and the Angels' Whisper!

THE FOREST FAIRY.

SOME people think that there are no Fairies now-a-days. There are so many large towns, full of dust and smoke, and so many railroads, on which trains run snorting and screaming through the pretty, lonely country-places, where the Fairies used to be found, that a great many people fancy these things have quite driven the Fairies out of England, and that we must cross the seas, and go to distant countries, if we want to see or hear any more of the dear little creatures. But indeed this is not the case. It is not so easy to get rid of the Fairies. Even in the dark, dull towns, there are gleams of Fairy brightness to be seen sometimes, and scenes of Fairy-land float before the eyes of many a child whose heart is light and whose spirit is pure; and the Fairies come in dreams, and take it away to dance and play with them for a while, and forget the toils and hardships of its everyday life. Ay, and even when the railway-train whistles and screeches through the woods where the Fairies used to hold their midnight meetings, and over the soft meadows where they danced so often in the Fairy-ring, it cannot drive the little Elves away for

good and all. They stop their ears sometimes, and go further away from the harsh, screeching sound, but they do not quite desert the place; and they never will desert dear old England, as long as there are warm and tender hearts to love their kind ways, and eager little ears to hear all the pretty stories of which Fairy-land is full, and which help to make it so pleasant.

But there was no big town and no railroad in that part of the country where dwelt the Fairy of whom I am going to tell you. There was a large wood, full of very tall trees, so thick with their beautiful foliage that the rays of the sun could scarcely force their way through in the brightest summer day; but underneath the boughs it was right pleasant to walk, for there you found beautiful shade, and the mossy turf beneath your feet was soft as velvet. And when the calm pale moon shed her mild rays over the earth, peeping in through the thick foliage, she gave a quiet, holy light to the wood here and there, and you felt as if you were in some sacred spot, where you were only inclined to speak in whispering tones, lest you should disturb the solemn silence of the place.

One tree—much larger than most of its companions—stood in the middle of the wood. It was very old, but yet it was not quite hollow, for its wood was stout and tough. Its great roots ran out on all sides of it, and you could not look upon it without confessing at once that it was a Royal tree. And in the crown of this tree dwelt the loveliest little Fairy

that any one ever set eyes upon. She was about seven inches high, of perfect face and form, and with a queenly look about her which inspired respect, just as her beauty and sweet manners compelled people to love the very sight of her.

But that forest was her kingdom, and that was her palace; and she wore the lightest, prettiest dress you can imagine. Madame Elise never turned out a dress so elegant and lovely—and that is saying a great deal, because everybody knows that Madame Elise is almost a Fairy herself in the way she produces beautiful dresses! But nothing could equal my Fairy: and, moreover, she was as kind at heart as she was beautiful. Her great pleasure was to do good wherever she could. If any of the animals in the forest were hurt, they would often come moaning up to the tree, and seldom indeed was it that they did not receive assistance; and many of the poor people who lived near that forest had felt the kindness of the Fairy, and had had pieces of good luck happen to them, which you may be very sure were all of her doing.

She usually drove about the forest in a little wicker carriage, drawn by six squirrels; and it was the prettiest sight imaginable to see her drive the dear little creatures, well broken-in as they were, and dart about through the trees in the most graceful manner possible. This was her favourite conveyance; but sometimes she would ride about on the back of a squirrel or a rabbit, and now and then took a flight on a wood-pigeon; for she was not at all a stay-at-home


Fairy, but loved to roam about the country, and see what there was to be seen.

Now it happened that at no great distance from the forest lived an old man, in a small cottage which was still older than himself, and was therefore in a sad state of decay. This old man was by trade a faggot-seller, for he had the right of cutting wood in the forest; and he used to cut faggots and sell them to the people around, by which means he earned enough to keep the pot boiling. His only companion was his little granddaughter, who was everything in the world to him, for he had no other relation or friend. She was as good a little girl as you will find anywhere, and very fond of her old grandfather, who, on his side, was tenderly attached to her. Every morning she would be up early enough to light the fire and get his bit of breakfast ready for him before he went out to his work; and when he was gone, she would sweep the room, and put the place tidy; and then, when she had finished, it was time to get his dinner ready, and she would prepare it very carefully, and then take it out to him in the forest in a little basket;—and right glad was the old man to see his little Lilian (for so was the child called) coming along under the shady trees. He would listen to her pretty prattle while he ate his dinner; and often she would bring her knitting out, and sit there, in the fine summer afternoons, until he had finished his work and they could walk home together.

It was a pretty sight to see the old man and the

young child walking hand-and-hand, her large, loving blue eyes turned up to his old, weather-beaten face, and her little tongue asking him questions about the forest, and the big world beyond it, of which he knew but little more than she did; for the old man had passed nearly all his life in the cottage where he lived, and the little he knew of the wide world was gathered from conversations now and then with neighbours as poor as himself, but who had been tempted, from time to time, to roam further from home.

Very happily and very contentedly did Lilian and her grandfather live for some time, till she grew to be about eleven years old, and the old man's strength began to fail. He could no longer do such a long day's work as he used to do, and seemed to get more tired of an evening, and less and less inclined to get up early in the morning. But worse than that—for troubles seldom come alone—he could no longer sell his faggots so easily as in the old days. People had taken more and more to burning coal, and he had to go far and wide to gather the few pence which his faggots would bring him. No other occupation could he get; and all this time the old cottage got worse and worse. The rain came in, and the cold got through the walls; and when the high winds blew, it often seemed as if the whole cottage would be blown down—the windows rattled in their casements, and the walls seemed to shake; and everything showed that the place was hardly fit to be lived in. But what distressed the old man more than anything else in these hard times was



the thought of his little grandchild. What would become of her if he was to be taken away from her? She could not live alone in the cottage, even if it were better and stronger and safer. How would she live, and where would she go to? These thoughts greatly troubled his mind, and he hardly dared to look forward to the future.

Still times got worse—meat became a scarce article in the cottage, and, save as they could, there was so little to save from, that their prospects were very bad. Winter came on, and the old man felt his heart grow heavier, and heavier, as he thought of the joyous days of his boyhood, when Christmas-time brought lightness of heart and gladness of spirit to him, and all seemed so mirthful and happy. Why should Christmas-time be so different to his little Lilian? Not that she was wanting in cheerfulness, for she was a light-hearted, lively child; but she had little to make her so, and he could do so little for her!

These thoughts were in his heart as he sallied forth the day before Christmas-day, and walked slowly into the forest. He came to the place where he had been working last, and determined that he would try and cut and make up a few faggots, and forget his cares in the healthy work before him. At it he went, and worked steadily on till past twelve o'clock. The leaves were crisp under his feet, and the air was fresh; for there was frost abroad, but not hard enough to be very cold; such weather it was as makes folks genial and happy in their hearts, and tingles their

fingers without making them more than *just* so cold that a hearty rub sends the warm blood through the veins, and makes them warm and glowing again. And the old man looked up from his work, and put down his axe, and rubbed his hands, as he saw Lilian coming slowly along the wood with her little basket. On she came, till she got close to him, and then she said—

“Poor Gran, there isn’t much dinner to-day—only potatoes and a crust of bread: but the salt will make the potatoes taste nice; and then, how many poor people have no bread at all!”

This was the most cheerful thing that poor Lilian could say, and she was quite right in reminding her grandfather how many people were worse off than he was. For I think all of us are much too fond of comparing ourselves with those who are *better off* than we are; and this makes us discontented; whereas, if we would only think how very many more there are who are worse off, we should find we had great reason to be contented with our lot.

The old man sighed: but he did not wish to seem sad before Lilian; so he tried to put on a cheerful tone, and proposed that they should stroll down into the forest and find a sheltered nook where they might eat their dinner. So they walked down a little way, carrying the basket, till they came to a large oak, which seemed to offer the very shelter which they sought. Accordingly, they sat down close to it, made themselves as comfortable as they

could, and began to open the basket and take out its contents. But scarcely had the cloth been spread upon the ground and disclosed the potatoes that were in it, and scarcely had Lilian produced the dark-coloured brown bread which was to aid the meal, when a clear little silvery voice above their heads said, very distinctly—

“Who is it that eats bread and potatoes for dinner on Christmas-eve?”

Lilian and her grandfather both looked up, but could see nothing but a pretty brown squirrel munching a nut in the boughs above them; so they looked at each other and stared; and then each thought it must have been a mistake, and the grandfather put out his hand to take a potatoe. But, wonder of wonders! the potatoe, which to all appearance was a vegetable of unblemished character, duly baked and only wanting to be eaten, deliberately rolled away of its own accord, and was immediately followed by all the others.

Lilian and her grandfather were too much astonished to try and prevent them, but the old man, being uncommonly hungry after his work, made a rapid snatch at the bread. Back, however, he drew his hand more quickly than he had put it out, for instead of the brown loaf there was only a hedgehog, who scuttled off as fast he could towards a neighbouring rabbit-hole, while, at the same time, the identical voice again exclaimed—

“*Not* bread and potatoes on Christmas-eve, *I*



The Forest Fairy.





The Forest Fairy.



it is *my* fault bringing Gran down under the Oak; so pray don't be angry with *him* !”

Then the Fairy smiled sweetly upon the child, and she said—

“Lilian!” (for Fairies know children's names by instinct, and, if they are good children, are very partial to them,) “I am not angry, nor are you so very, very poor; for no one is very poor who has a loving heart like yours, and tries to be contented. But you shall not dine off bread and potatoes to-day. I am obliged to go away on business; but when you and your grandfather are hungry, look the other side of the oak, and if you want anything, rap three times on the old tree.”

When she had done speaking, the Fairy gracefully bent her head, and disappeared immediately. The old man looked at Lilian, and Lilian looked at the old man, till at last the former said—

“But how about our victuals? I'm precious hungry.”

“Oh, Gran!” said Lilian, “let's trust the beautiful Lady, and look the other side of the oak.”

So they walked round the other side of the oak, and what do you think they saw? A plain deal table, firmly fixed in the ground, with a chair on each side of it. Upon it was a snowy-white table-cloth, and opposite each chair was a plate, a knife and fork, a piece of bread, and a mug. But, glorious to behold, in the middle of the table was a magnificent sirloin of beef, done to a turn, with the fat still crackling from the fire, and a perfect pool of rich, good gravy

all round it, not to mention delicately-white horse-radish strewn upon it in profusion. On one side of it was a dish of smoking-hot potatoes, and on the other one of tempting-looking Yorkshire pudding, whilst a large carving-knife and fork lay by the dish, and seemed by their appearance and attitude to invite the strangers to make use of them without further delay.

Gran wanted no second invitation : seating himself at the table without the loss of a moment, he only waited until Lilian had said grace for both of them, before he commenced a vigorous attack upon the joint before him. You never saw an old man with such an appetite ! Consider, this was the third day he had had no meat, and the clear, cold air, together with the exercise of chopping wood, had given him a capacity for eating which few aldermen could equal, and which a Lord mayor himself could scarcely surpass. Lilian, too, enjoyed her beef thoroughly, though she continually stopped, and her eyes glistened with pleasure, as she saw her dear old grandfather so supremely happy. Presently, however, he stopped, and, looking round, perceived a foaming jug of ale upon the table, which he had not observed before. He instantly filled both the mugs, and they drank the Fairy's health with three times three.

However, in this world nothing lasts for ever, and after a while they seemed to have had as much beef as they wanted. Lilian, who had only had half a mugful of the ale, thought she should

like a glass of water, and modestly knocked three times at the oak, according to the Fairy's directions. Instantly there appeared, to her great surprise, four Rabbits in the livery of the Fairy; that is to say, white breeches with light-blue stripes, and silver jackets with gold embroidery. In their hands they bore a large dish, and having removed the beef and vegetables from the table, they deposited upon it an enormous plum-pudding, and stood bowing around the table as if to invite the company to fall to at once. This was not to be resisted, and although Lilian resisted all her grandfather's entreaties to do more than just taste the pudding, the old gentleman fell to with a relish in which no one could have believed who had seen him previously tackle the beef. The pudding removed, (from which he parted with a sigh,) the attendant Rabbits at once produced cheese and celery, of which, however, the old man could partake but sparingly, and in a few moments the dinner was over.

When Lilian had said grace, she was not quite sure what to do next, for it seemed very ungrateful to go away without thanking the kind Fairy who had given them so good a dinner in exchange for their bread and potatoes. There was no Fairy, however, to be seen, and the Rabbits stood there bowing so politely, that neither Lilian nor her grandfather felt it right to be sitting there so long and keeping them out in the cold. They slowly rose, therefore, and left the table, which almost immediately afterwards disappeared, and the

Rabbits also. The well-dined couple stood looking at the oak a little time with a look of lingering affection, and then walked slowly back to the place where the old man had been at work. All of a sudden, Lilian remembered that she had left her basket behind her, with the cloth which had held the potatoes. So she ran back as quickly as she could, but neither cloth nor basket could she see. She looked about everywhere, but in vain, and felt quite inclined to cry ; but having always been taught to make the best of everything, she tried to hope that these little articles had been picked up by some one still poorer and in greater distress than her grandfather and she, and that they might be of great service to them. Still, she could not help being sorry to have lost her property. Her grandfather, however, was not angry with her, partly because he was too fond of her for *that*, and partly because he had eaten such a good dinner, which put him, as a good dinner puts most people, in a particularly good humour. He did not do much more work that day, and when Lilian and he walked home together, the old boy was in better spirits than he had been for many a long day. He cracked a joke or two, and laughed at his own jokes (which is generally the sign of a contented disposition), and even went so far as to sing a verse or two of a merry old song, which quite delighted both the child and himself.

As they got near home, however, and he began to think how differently things would look there to what they had done under the oak-tree, a kind of

heaviness seemed to steal over him, which Lilian strove to chase away by cheerful conversation : and so they journeyed on until they turned a corner which brought them full in view of their cottage home.

But what a strange sight met their eyes ! How changed the appearance of everything ! The fence round the garden in front of the cottage, which had been quite broken down, had disappeared altogether, and a spick and span iron rail-fence stood there in its place. The weeds which Lilian had not had time to finish plucking up were gone, every weed of them, and the garden was as neat and tidy as if a regular gardener had been looking after it every day in the week. And then the house ! Instead of leaning a little on one side, as it used to do—tempting the cruel wind to drive the cold rain against it and to try to turn it quite over—there it was, upright and firm as any new model cottage of them all. No casements shook, all were firmly fixed ; and the brown paper with which many broken panes of glass had been from time to time replaced, had all disappeared, and new panes appeared in every window. The door, too, had its broken latch mended, and instead of the wind whistling under it as before, a stout, thick bit of list carefully nailed on, quite put a stop to *that* ; and as to the roof ! why there wasn't a broken tile left upon it, but every tile was as straight and new as if it had just been put on, and put on well too. The whole place was so altered that the old grandfather opened his mouth nearly wide enough to have swallowed it

down, cottage and all, while Lilian darted forward with a scream of delight, crying out—

“Oh, the Fairy! the Fairy!—the dear, good Fairy! I am sure it is she who has been here.”

The old man stood stock-still in amazement, until another cry from Lilian, who had now opened the door, woke him up. He hurried on to the cottage, and entered after her. What do you think he saw? In the middle of the room in which they usually lived was a bran-new table, whilst four new chairs were placed about in different parts of the room—which had also been newly papered, and had a nice new carpet of a common, but strong and useful sort.

Everything appeared to have been changed, as if by magic, from being old and worn out, to new and strong, and there was an air of comfort about the whole place which was perfectly delightful. Nor were the wonders to cease here. They opened the door which led into the kitchen behind the living room, and a sight met their eyes which caused them both to start back with astonishment. There, indeed, was the kitchen the same as ever, but the grate was evidently new; new saucepans, a bright and clean row, hung by the side of the wall; a new set of crockery was ranged upon the shelves; and even the big kitchen-poker was bright and clean, and evidently prepared to start upon a new life fit for any work that might be required of him. But, more marvellous than all, in the middle of the kitchen, as much at home as if it had been born and bred there, stood the

identical table which had borne the welcome meal which Lilian and her grandfather had enjoyed under the Fairy's Oak—yes! there was no mistake about it—and a neat white table-cloth upon it, marked in the corner "F. F.," which plainly stood for "Forest Fairy," showed whence it came. Nor was the table empty—the remainder of that noble sirloin of beef was there, and the magnificent plum-pudding stood by its side, so tempting as almost to induce the old man to attack it again at once. There it was, and there were the knives and forks they had used in the forest, and the very crumbs of the bread and cheese they had left; for the table seemed to have been transported just as it was from beneath the oak-tree, except that the beef and plum-pudding, which the Rabbit-footman had taken away, had been put back upon it. And oh! joy of joys! upon the kitchen dresser, lo and behold! stood Lilian's basket, safe and sound.

"O my dear old basket!" cried the child, and ran up and took hold of it; when, on lifting up the lid, what do you think she saw? The cloth was there in which the potatoes had been wrapped; but, instead of potatoes, there was a fat goose, all trussed ready for roasting, with a stuffing of sage and onions which it made your mouth water to look at; while close by, carefully wrapped up in a cloth of its own, was perhaps the richest-looking mince-pie that ever gladdened the eyes of a hungry schoolboy. A little parcel lay upon the top of the cloth, to which was tied a slip of paper, and on it was written, "A Christmas-box for

Lilian." She eagerly opened it, and what do you think was in it? A neat little work-box, with cotton, needles, scissors, and everything that could make a work-box complete; and not only this, but a warm winter shawl wrapped carefully round the work-box, but which would be more useful, as the old grandfather wisely observed, when it was wrapped round Lilian's shoulders on a cold winter's day.

Two such happy faces as those of Lilian and her grandfather are not to be seen every day in the week, I can assure you. It was altogether such a happy change from the condition in which they had left the cottage in the morning, that they hardly knew how to believe their own eyes.

"Oh, Grandfather!" exclaimed the child, "the Fairy, the dear, good, kind Fairy! I know it is all her doing. How I should like to thank her!"

"So you shall, Lilian," said a pleasant voice at that moment; and, looking out of the window, they saw the Forest Fairy in her squirrel-carriage standing at the garden-gate. "You may thank me, Lilian," she went on to say; "but you may thank yourself too. All that I have done for you and for your good grandfather to-day has been done for your sake, because you have a tender, loving heart, and a contented disposition, so that it is a real pleasure to make you happy. If it had not been so, I could have done nothing for you, because we Fairies have only power to help grateful, loving people, who try to help themselves and each other. You have done this,

and you have been a good and attentive child to your old grandfather; and so you see there has come a reward to you when you did not expect it." And the Fairy smiled, oh, so sweetly! upon Lilian; and then she kissed her hand to her, and cracked her little whip, the handle of which was of the whitest ivory, and the lash made of skeins of gold thread; and off darted the squirrels and carried their mistress back to the green forest and the ancient oak.

And from that day forward Lilian and her grandfather found that everything went well with them, so that they lived together as happily as possible, and always remembered with joy and gratitude that merry Christmas dinner under the Fairy's Oak.

Ah! you will say that we do not see these little Fairies now. I am not so sure about *that*, and I know that people, small and great, who have loving, tender hearts, who make sunshine around them by their pleasant ways, are grateful for the blessings they have, and always make the best of everything, these are the people most likely to see kind Fairies, and it is on them that misfortune falls most lightly; their troubles fly away like magic, and they seem to have found out some secret of being happy, which is every bit as good and useful as any that could have been told them by the Forest Fairy.

PINS AND PINCUSHIONS.

A RESPECTABLE old gentleman once sat down suddenly on a Pincushion, and as it happened to be full of Pins at the time, the results were exceedingly unpleasant. He flew at once into a violent passion, and after walking up and down the room, rubbing himself vigorously for several moments, he vowed that he would have no more Pincushions in his house, but would give immediate orders that every one of them should be thrown out of the window. The news of this resolution being conveyed abroad by common report, gave the greatest alarm to the large and respectable body of Pins, who, for domestic and social reasons, had taken up their abode in the various Pincushions belonging to the worthy man's house. They lost no time, therefore, in calling a meeting upon the subject, which was held in the nursery, just after the maids had gone to bed. Every available Pin in the house attended this meeting: there were Pins with heads and Pins without heads; Pins bent double with age, or by the cruel pressure of human fingers; large Scarf Pins, and teeny-tiny Pins that seemed too small to be useful; and even several Double

Pins, protected by the cap which prevents their running into the children's fingers, and which are commonly known as Nursery Pins, hurried to this important meeting. Among the company, too, were a number of Needles, who all felt deeply interested in the question, not knowing how they might be affected by it themselves. No less than thirteen Pincushions were present, from the large four-cornered Pincushion, which always stood on the dressing-table in the nursery, down to the little round bran-stuffed Pincushion which Jemima, the nursery-maid, always carried in her pocket. These individuals felt the matter quite as keenly as the Pins, for they knew that they had done no harm purposely, and thought it terribly hard that any respectable Pincushion should be turned adrift, and exposed to rain and ruin in the open air, merely because of want of caution on the part of an old gentleman.

When the Pins, Needles, and Pincushions had all assembled, and had turned out of the room several Knitting Needles which, being made of wood, had obviously no right to be present, they placed a highly respectable Pin with a gold head in the chair, and began to consider what was best to be done. Some were in favour of an united attack upon the old gentleman; but this was at once overruled as absurd, and likely to lead to no good results. Some proposed that all the Pins and Needles should at once occupy all the Pincushions, points outward, so that the hand which seized any one of them should at once

drop it in pain. This course, however, appeared to have its difficulties ; and equally so the proposal of a venerable Darning Needle, that the maids should be asked to go in a body to the old gentleman and beg for mercy. For, as maids do not understand the language of Needles, and are apt to treat Pins with a contempt akin to cruelty—dropping them constantly on the floor, and sticking them at random here and there about their dresses, without any consideration for their feelings—it was evidently improbable that they could be persuaded to undertake the suggested task.

The furniture, generally, behaved very well on the occasion. The Drawing-room Sofa professed his readiness to allow Pins to be stuck in his sides and back, if the Pincushions should be banished ; and the old Sofa in the nursery made a merit of following his example, at which everybody smiled, knowing perfectly well that Pins, ay, and Needles too for the matter of that, were stuck in him freely every day of his life, without his daring to offer the smallest objection. The Arm Chairs, too, came out very well, readily offering their arms to any well-conducted Pins who should be deprived of their natural homes. And no doubt the intentions of the Coal Scuttle were kind and good, although the Pins bristled with indignation when he remarked that any Pins might be thrown into *him*, and welcome too.

The Needles had some doubt at first whether it was worth their while to make any fuss about the matter, as they were only very partially dependent upon Pin-

cushions, many of them living like gentlemen in cases of their own, and being thus safe from any anxiety on the subject, even if Pincushions were done away with altogether. One or two of them ventured to hint as much, but they were at once told by the better class that they were Needles without eyes, and that a more generous feeling ought to prevail among members of one common family. A Pin without a head attempted to sneer at Pincushions generally, remarking that whenever *he* had been placed in one, he had the greatest difficulty in getting out again, as his headless condition made him hard to see. He thought, therefore, that all Pins should be allowed to lie about where they pleased, and that Pincushions were of little use. This opinion, however, was so unfavourably received that the unhappy Pin fell down upon the carpet, and was lost immediately.


After much discussion, it was resolved that as nothing could possibly be done, it was better to do nothing. There were some Pins who thought it absolutely necessary to do something, just as there are some people who never can let things go on quietly, but *must* make a fuss, and be up and doing. Fortunately, however, the wiser Pins prevailed, and, as they had had a good talk over the matter, they retired into their several Pincushions for the night. And, in truth, it was just as well that they did so, just as it would be quite as well if people would sometimes leave things alone to right themselves without interfering.

For, to tell the truth, the old gentleman very soon forgot that he had ever intended to get rid of the Pincushions, and, in fact, as he usually pinned his cravat when he dressed for the evening, to prevent its slipping round, he would have found it highly inconvenient if the Pincushion upon his dressing-table had been thrown out of the window. He, therefore, gave no such order ; not a Pincushion in the whole house was disturbed ; everything went on just as usual, and the Pins and Needles in that house lived as happily and contentedly ever afterwards as such sharp-pointed creatures can ever expect to live.

THE DISCONTENTED COW.

THERE was once a Cow who had everything in the world to make a reasonable cow happy. There was a nice green meadow for her to walk about in, with sweet grass to eat, and shady trees to lie under in the hot weather; there was a delightful pond at one corner of the field, the water of which was pure and good, and which was not so deep but that the animals could easily walk in when they felt inclined, to enjoy the refreshing ripple round their legs, and cool their bodies when heated by the summer sun. Also there was a capital open shed in which they might take refuge from a storm at any time, and a nice warm stable in which they slept at night. Several companions, too, had our Cow—some of her own race, a couple of ponies who were very friendly, and a highly respectable donkey: so that one would have thought that no Cow had a fairer prospect of unmixed happiness. But it unfortunately happens, that those who have most of the blessings of this life are sometimes the least contented; and so it was with this foolish Cow.

She had a restless longing to see the world, and would oftentimes bemoan her sad fate at being



kept to one meadow when there was so much to see and enjoy outside it.

"Look," she would say to the Donkey (who was always ready to lend a patient ear to anybody's tale of distress)—"Look at that flock of sheep trooping merrily by; they are doubtless going to the neighbouring market-town, where they will see all that goes on. See again those post-horses, with a boy with a red jacket on the back of one of them—they also are about to see the world. And observe, too, those oxen; how they move slowly and with dignity along the road, taking things quite easily, and evidently enjoying their ramble; whilst I, who am of every bit as good a stock as they are, and better than the sheep and those sorry nags, am kept close to this one field, and never allowed to increase my information by a ramble out into the world!"

Poor old Cow! I suppose she did not know that the sheep would only see what went on in the market-town till some one came who would buy them, and then their lives and amusement would soon end together under the butcher's cruel hand! Neither was she aware that the post-horses would be harnessed to a heavy carriage, and whipped and spurred and made to keep up a sharp trot for ten or a dozen miles at least, till they were nearly dropping from heat and fatigue, and would have given worlds to have exchanged her lot for their own! And probably she did not think of what was going to happen to the poor oxen, already condemned to death, who would be

taken to the slaughter-house as soon as they got to their journey's end, their heads dragged down by means of ropes fastened to their horns, and then stunned by heavy blows and murdered by the slaughterer's knife!

The Cow only thought of her own complaint, and as the Donkey, if he knew all these things, saw no use in talking about them, and was indeed not given to many words, and consequently said nothing in reply, she kept brooding over her sorrows, and at last grew to consider herself an extremely ill-used and unfortunate person. Day after day she would walk round and round the field, longing to get out, and wondering what there was to see in the world beyond.

On one side of the field there was a road, from which it was separated by a quickset-hedge, and, at certain places, this had got rather thin and worn away. The Cow got into the habit of rubbing against this hedge as she stood there bemoaning her hard fate, and in time she wore away a regular gap at one place. And so, very early one morning, when she was at her usual employment, she felt the hedge give way before her pushing, and giving another shove or two, she burst out through the hedge, and stood, a free animal, in the turnpike-road. She at once determined, that, as this was her first opportunity of seeing the world, she would certainly take advantage of it. So she started off at a trot down the road till she was well away from the field, and then walked boldly

forward, looking around her on every side to see what was to be seen. She had not gone very far before she met an old Duck, with her young ones behind her, waddling along close to a pond by the roadside.

"Good morning, Mistress Duck," said the Cow ; "I have come out for a ramble in the world. Have you a mind to come too?"

"Quack, quack," said the Duck, in her own language ; "I have no inclination to ramble, thank you. I have a capital pond to swim about in with my family, and the farm-yard is just opposite, where I am safely housed at night, and well fed during the day. I should indeed be a fool, were I to wish to leave so happy a home."

The Cow walked on some way further, and presently met a Donkey, eating thistles by the side of the road as happily as need be.

"How do you do, Donkey?" said she. "Will you join me in the ramble which I am taking to-day?"

"Had you looked at my leg," replied the Donkey, "you would see that there is a cord tied to it, by which I am fastened to that gate-post, so that I am in no condition to ramble; and even if I were, I think I should prefer to stay here with these thistles. Thank you all the same, however."

So the Cow left the Donkey, and walked for some distance, till she came to a field with a wooden fence, close to which some Sheep were feeding, to one of whom she spoke.

"Sheep," said she, "I am out for a real sight of the

world to-day. What do you say to joining me? This fence is old and rotten, and with a good push I could easily make a gap for you to pass through: what say you?"

"I should be stupid indeed," answered the Sheep, "to leave this field, in which the grass is particularly sweet, and venture out upon a dusty road of which I know absolutely nothing. No, thank you, Mrs. Cow, I would rather stay where I am."

The Cow made no reply, but walked on till she observed a Hen sitting on the grass-plot in front of a small house.

"Hen," she said, "you may perhaps be inclined to see the world—that is what *I* am about; and if you wish to do the same, here is a companion ready for you."

"Indeed," clucked the old Hen, "I am truly obliged to you for the offer; but I have read in books, and have also been told by travelled friends, that there are many dangers in the world, and that even foxes may be met when you least expect them. Upon the whole, therefore, I must say 'No' to your polite offer."

The Cow began to wonder at the bad taste which all the creatures seemed to her to have; but she walked on, rather more slowly now, for the day was getting hotter, till she came upon a Cat, sitting half-asleep, sunning herself in a cottage window.

"Mistress Puss," said the Cow, "are you for a walk this morning? I am seeing the world, and shall be delighted with your company."

"What a bore these tramps are!" said the Cat, as if speaking to herself, in a sleepy tone. "Don't stand talking there, if you please—this is private property, you must move on!"

The Cow did not much like being spoken to in this manner; so she gave a moo of indignation, and left the Cat to her dignity.

After a while she came to another pond, on which were a number of Geese, whom she also invited to accompany her; but they all raised their heads and hissed so violently, that she saw at once it was no use asking *them*. Then she saw a black-and-tan terrier Dog near a house, but just as she began to ask him her usual question, he ran out, barking and snapping at her heels, and saying in the dog language (which we all know to be Latin)—

"I should like to know who gave *you* leave to be gadding about the country like this! You are somebody's Cow that has strayed, *I* know! Go home, you foolish creature, go home at once!"


The Cow told him, in her plainest moo, that he was an ill-mannered cur; but he only barked the more at this; so she worked herself up into a trot again, and he followed and barked at her till she had run for a quarter of a mile. She began to get rather tired now; the road was dusty and hard, and there was no nice sweet grass or hay, as there was at home; and, moreover, she came upon no more ponds, and began to get dreadfully thirsty, as well as footsore and weary: still she trudged on till

she came to a kind of green upon which some village schoolboys were playing. I am sorry to say that these were rude and cruel boys, who, as soon as they saw the poor animal, set up a loud shout of "A strange Cow!—a strange Cow!" and began to pelt her with stones and mud, and to run after her with sticks. She was so tired that she felt as if she could not trot again to save her life; but when she felt herself struck by the sticks, and one bad boy even hit her with a great bramble, she started off again, and at last got clear of her pursuers.

But the day was now far advanced, and she became more and more weary and worn. Then she began to think of her peaceful, happy home, and friendly companions, and of kind John, who always relieved her of her milk, and saw her safe into the stable in the cow-yard every night. She remembered all the home comforts of which she had thought but little when she had them, and she felt how wrong, as well as foolish, she had been to be discontented, and knew at last how little there was to be got by going out to see the world. She saw that the Duck and the Sheep, the Donkey and the Cat, the Geese and the Hen, had all been wiser than her, and she felt very humble and very unhappy. But it was no use feeling thus now; she was far from home—how far she did not know—and to turn back would have been useless, for she did not think she should ever find the way. So at last, quite worn out and exhausted, she turned down a lane out of the high

road, dragged her weary body along as far as she could, and after crawling thus for a short distance, lay down on the rough, coarse grass by the side of the road, panting and quivering with fatigue, her eyes heavy and glazed, her tail draggled with mud, her back bleeding where the bramble had scratched her, and her dry tongue lolling out of her poor parched mouth, longing for a drop of that cold water which she could see in fancy, but which she must long for in vain. There lay the poor suffering Cow, bitterly repenting her folly, and expecting that nothing but death would end her sad day's history.

Meanwhile, you must know, that somehow or other John did not miss this Cow till the afternoon. I suppose he had a great deal to do, and was not much about the cow-field that day; but it was three or four o'clock before he found that this Cow was not there. He called her with his well-known call, but to no purpose. He hunted about everywhere, but in vain; and at last he walked all round the field, to find if there was any weak place in the hedge; and there, sure enough, he discovered the gap through which the Cow had made her way into the road. There was nothing for it but mount Brownie, the trusty pony, and set out to see if he could come up with the truant. So he mounted accordingly, and being a good, thoughtful man, took a wisp of nice fresh hay under his arm, in case he should find the poor creature half-starved with hunger, which he thought very likely.



Before he had gone far, he saw the Duck and her brood by the roadside, and, stopping his pony—

“Duck,” said he, “have you seen our old Cow pass this way?”

“Quack, quack, quack,” replied the Duck; by which she meant to say, “I certainly *did* see a Cow pass by early this morning, but I do not know whether it was *your* Cow or not—how should I?”

So John rode sharply on until he got to the place where the Donkey was tied to the gate-post.

“Donkey,” asked he, “have you seen a red and white Cow pass here to-day?”

“E-haw, e-haw,” answered the Donkey; by which he plainly signified that he had seen the Cow, but, being unable to move far from where he was, could not speak as to her movements after she turned the next corner of the road.

On trotted John, and very soon came to the field where the Sheep were feeding, by the fence of which he pulled up.

“Halloo, Sheep,” said he; “has a Cow been along this way?”

“Baa, baa,” said the Sheep, meaning to state the whole truth about the Cow having tempted them to break through the fence, and their virtuous refusal.

John now felt pretty sure that he was on the right track; so he pressed forward at a brisk pace, till he met with the worthy old Hen.

“Well, old lady,” said he, “I’ve lost a Cow; I wonder if *you* can tell me any news of her?”

"Cluck, cluck," said the Hen; telling at once all she knew about the matter; upon hearing which John rode quickly on, and pressed forward until he came to the cottage in the window of which sat the Cat,—now, as the sun was going down, about to leave her seat for a cosy place by the fireside.

"Puss," said John, "our best Cow has strayed away to-day; do you happen to have seen her?"

"Miaw-aw," said the Cat in answer, in a languid and affected tone; "really I don't trouble myself much about wayfaring animals; but, now you mention it, there was some such creature here a few hours ago, who intruded her impertinent conversation upon me."

John spoke no more to this lazy and conceited individual, but went on his way, and soon came to the pond, out of which the Geese had just come, and were flapping their wings to shake off the wet before they went home to the farm-yard. To them he put the same question, and they told him all they knew in loud and apparently angry hisses, which they meant to be the most friendly greeting possible. On went honest John, and soon arrived at the house where lived the black-and-tan terrier.

"Have you seen a Cow, my good Dog?" he asked in a friendly tone.

"Bow-wow, bow-wow," responded the Dog; "ay, that have I; a very ass of a Cow, roaming she knew not where; and I bade her go home, but she wouldn't; and I don't know where she is gone to."

Then John urged his pony forward, and they came to the green; but the boys had all gone to bed, and were dreaming of tops and marbles; so he could get no news from them; and if he had seen them, I dare say they would have been ashamed to have mentioned the poor Cow whom they had treated so badly. So he pushed on, and on, till he came to the very lane where the poor animal had turned down; and he was just going to pass it, when he saw the mark of the hoof of some large animal which had gone that way. So wise John turned Brownie down the lane, and tracked the hoof-marks along it, till at last he came to the bank on which our old friend was lying, panting and sobbing with exhaustion, and like to die of hunger and thirst. John jumped off the pony at once and went up to the suffering creature.

"Poor old Cow!" he said, "you have not gained much by playing the truant, I think!" and he took out his wisp of hay, and, looking round, perceived a pond in the field over the hedge. So he jumped quickly over and moistened the hay in the water, and came back to the Cow.

She seemed to recognise his friendly voice, and gave a faint moan of pleasure; then she nibbled a little bit of the hay, and gladly and greedily sucked the water out of it, as well as she could. Then John helped her to get up; and as he knew of a farm-yard close by, and it was too late to think of getting home that night, he drove her there very gently, and asked the good farmer to give the Cow, and him, and the

pony as well, a night's lodging ; which he willingly did. Next morning John gave the poor Cow a good washing, taking off the mud-stains, and the blood from the scratch on her back, and freshening her up, fit for the journey which was before them ; and then they started, and went very gently home. As the Cow passed the various animals which she had met and accosted the day before, she turned away her head, and felt quite ashamed, remembering how much wiser they had been than she, and how sadly her ramble into the wide world might have ended.

At last they reached their home-meadow, and the other animals were very glad to welcome their old companion. She, for her part, moo'd aloud for joy, and visited each well-known corner of the field with a painful feeling that, but for the kindly care of John, she might never have seen it again. And when some of the other animals asked her how she had liked her ramble, and what she thought of the world, she shook her head with a very wise look, and told them all that had happened.

"My friends," said she, "I have learned a lesson which I shall never forget. I was well off here : my friends were kind, my blessings were many. I ought to have been a happy and contented Cow. Through my foolish indulgence of a discontented disposition I nearly lost my happy home and all its advantages. From my sad experience I have now learned to know, that, in whatever station or position in life we are placed, the best plan is to cultivate a calm and con-

tented disposition, not to fancy that others are better off than we are, and indulge a restless longing for change, but to value the blessings which we have, to make the most of them, to try and make others happy, and by our conduct in life to deserve the happiness which is within the reach of all who know the right way to seek it."

With these and similar expressions the Cow replied to all questions that were asked her : never more did she express the slightest wish to see the world, but remained perfectly happy in the home meadow, passing the hours from milking-time to milking-time in such placid tranquillity and ease of mind that, as a consequence, she soon gave twice as much milk as before, and was doubly valued and beloved by John and the dairy-maid during the rest of her existence in that happy home.

My children, take an example from this worthy Cow. "Home is home, be it never so homely:" do not compare it with other homes and think that they are more pleasant. Here are your best friends; here are the blessings which the good God has given you to make the best use of. He loves to see all His children happy and contented; and if you strive to be so, and to make others so too, you will not only be the more beloved by those around you, but He will love you, and will send His Spirit to be with you, to make you holy and happy here, and to guide you in the path which leads to those Mansions above where all is perfect happiness and perfect contentment for ever!

KATE'S ADVENTURES.

THERE were hundreds of Jackdaws in the air, circling about in their flight, and crying out in the caw of complaint which is peculiar to the Jackdaw. They were hovering about over Barracks Wood, and it was evident that there was some cause for their distress and anxiety. And so there was!

For many, many years, they had built their nests in the old pollard-trees of which the wood was full; and for many, many years, the boys had come, spring-time after spring-time, to rob the nests and carry away the eggs. There were many, though, which they could not find, for the crafty old birds crept into the queerest holes in the trees, and it was not always very easy to discover their nests. But though the boys came every year, the Jackdaws never got the least bit used to their coming, nor liked it any the better, and to-day they are showing their anger and fright in their usual manner—soaring far above the heads of their enemies, and crying out to each other what a shame it was that they might not build houses and bring up children just the same as men did them-

selves, without being bothered and disturbed by these tiresome boys.

But on this occasion it was not the boys alone who were engaged in robbing the Jackdaws' nests of their precious eggs. It is true enough that Ned was there, with Cecil and cousin Charlie, and all were engaged in plundering the birds as fast as they could, with two ladders upon which to stand, so as to get at the holes of the trees, and two large ladles, each tied to a long stick, to ladle up the eggs when they had been laid in the middle of a hollow tree (which was often the case) too low down to be reached by the arm alone. But why was Kate there too?—blue-eyed, tender Kate, that loved little birds and little animals of all kinds, and would be so sorry to see them suffer? Had she no pity for the poor Jackdaws, that she had ridden down on Kitty, her favourite pony, and was taking such pleasure in watching the boys at their bird-nesting? I should have thought she would have been sorry for the poor birds; but she seemed to enjoy the fun as much as any of them, and now and then called to her little sister Eva to see how well Ned managed to ladle up the eggs out of the trees. A happy set of children they were, and great fun they would have with the eggs when they got home, putting them in a basin of water to try by their sinking or floating whether they were good or bad, and then getting Nurse to have the good ones hard boiled, and trying to persuade Papa and Mamma that they were really

quite as good as plovers' eggs, only for the fancy of the thing!

Ay, the game was happy enough for *them*, but the Jackdaws thought very differently, and did all in their power to tell the children what they thought of them; and no doubt they would have been very much astonished if they had only understood what the birds were saying. However, as they didn't, it made no difference to them, and they went on enjoying themselves just the same.

After a while, Kate got rather tired of it: so she left Kitty standing quietly under the trees, and strolled on a little way by herself, out of the wood into the fern, which was higher than her head, and which spread for some distance over the park outside the wood. So she was at the edge of the wood, out of sight of the others, when she suddenly came upon a little Old Woman sitting at the foot of an oak-tree, close to the fern, with her arms upon her knees, and her head leaning upon her hands, as if she was thinking deeply.

"Halloo!" said Kate, for she was surprised to see anybody there.

Her voice roused the Old Woman, who turned round and looked at her, when Kate was more surprised than ever to see her face. It was exactly like a very large baked apple, baked quite brown, and crimped and crumpled up in the baking: her nose was darker than the rest of her face, in which her two eyes sparkled fiercely, like two Irish diamonds set in bog oak.

"Halloo!" she said to Kate. "So you are not contented with worrying my birds, but you come and disturb me, do you? I'll pay you for it! I'll serve you out!"

"Pray, ma'am, who are you?" asked Kate.

"Drat your imperence!" answered the other; "you know me well enough, or soon shall. I'm the Queen of the Jackdaws, that's who I am! and I *won't* have my birds treated like this any longer, that's what I won't! and as you have found me out, we'll soon see about it all." And as she spoke the Old Woman rose to her full height—which might have been that of a respectable gooseberry-bush—and scowling her worst scowl at Kate, waved the branch of an oak-tree which she held in her right hand, making at the same time a strange sign with her left, by placing her thumb firmly against the tip of her nose and spreading out her fingers as far as she could, pronouncing solemnly the mysterious words, "Busto-pop-perrywinkle-poddle-pods!" upon which Kate instantly sank upon the ground, and fell into a deep sleep.

What followed next I should never have known, if I had not overheard the Rabbits talking about it one summer's evening when I was strolling in the wood—it seems they were sitting outside the fern, and saw all that happened. No sooner was Kate sound asleep than the Old Woman blew a shrill whistle, and numbers of Jackdaws immediately surrounded her, cawing loudly.

"Birds!" she exclaimed in a loud tone, "here is one

of your enemies, though she ought to have known better. You know that I cannot give you the power to hurt her, but take her off at once, *you know where.*" And with these mysterious words she sat down again in exactly the same position as that in which Kate had found her.

More than two hundred of the Jackdaws (according to the Rabbits' counting; but of this you can never be quite certain, for they are sad dunces at their figures) instantly flew down and took hold of Kate, some by the frock, some by the hair, some supporting her body with their own backs, and up they flew with her into the air, so that the Rabbits saw no more of her, and squeaked aloud with astonishment !

When Kate opened her eyes, she had not the least idea in the world where she was. Was she in the world at all ? Perhaps so, but certainly it was a part of the world in which she had never been before. There was a bank, on which she was lying, and there was grass on the bank ; and several fir-trees, very tall and rather scraggy, were growing behind her. The soil seemed to be of red sandstone, and there was a quantity of broom and gorse all around her.

In the midst of the gorse, each at a little distance from the other, were very small cottages rising up, with a little thin wreath of smoke curling up out of the tiniest little chimneys you can imagine: they were built for the most part of sandy clay, made hard and formed into a kind of brick ; but some of them seemed only built of gorse and broom: and there was a wild look about the whole place which puzzled Kate very much

when she opened her eyes. But what puzzled her still more was to see, seated upon twenty very small camp-stools, exactly in front of her, twenty very little men, none of them above three feet high, and all of them looking straight at her with grave faces and with the deepest interest: they were dressed very much like men of an ordinary size, and the only things remarkable about them were, that their heads were invariably much too large for their bodies, that their waistcoat-buttons were each as big as half-a-crown, and they all wore leather gaiters, probably to protect them from the gorse. One, who appeared to be the oldest of the lot, rose from his chair the very moment that Kate woke up, and taking a step forward, bowed civilly, and said, in a bland tone of voice, "Well!"

Kate rubbed her eyes in reply, looked at him for a moment, and then replied—

"Well! where am I, and what do you want?"

"That, madam," answered the little man, "is precisely the question which I wish to address to you. You must know that this is Pigmy-land. Are you come here to be Queen of the Pigmies?"

"No," said Kate, "I hadn't thought of it, and I don't know how I came here at all!"

"*That's* all right, then," joyously exclaimed the little man; "we all thought you had come to be Queen; and as we don't happen to want a Queen at all, I am very glad to hear you hadn't thought of it. Perhaps, however, you could tell us what you *have* thought of, and what you want here?"

"I want to go home," said Kate; "I don't know this part of Barracks Wood, and I never saw a Pigmy before, and I want Ned and the rest of them, and to go and try the Jackdaws' eggs in water, and have the good ones, which sink, boiled for tea."

"Really," observed the Pigmy, "I am sorry to say that I don't understand you; there is no other world than that which you are now in, or else it is very certain that Pigmies, who are the wisest creatures that exist, would know all about it. But here there are no jackdaws, and I never heard of Ned or of Barracks Wood. If you are in possession of your sober senses, which I rather doubt, you must know perfectly well that it is absurd to say you never saw a Pigmy before, since it is they who people the world, and *you* are only a Pigmy who has grown beyond what your parents could have wished, poor people. Say what you want, and be off!"

Kate hardly knew what to reply, for she was thoroughly puzzled, and could hardly understand that she was no longer in the old world. She looked round and saw near her a few stones covered with moss, as if they had been the foundation of some old building long since destroyed, and, rather for something to say than for any other reason, she pointed to them, and said to the Pigmy, "Pray what is that?"

"Now, don't let us have any of your nonsense!" replied the little man. "You can't have lived in the world all your life without having seen the ruin of

the wall from which poor Humpty Dumpty had his terrible tumble; so don't tell *me!*"

"But I *haven't* lived in *this* world all my life," said poor Kate; "and besides, I don't believe that story much, because it must have been a high wall from which Humpty Dumpty fell, or he wouldn't have been hurt so much, and there seem to be only a few stones here."

"Stupid!" said the other, "you forget that it happened years and years ago; and besides, that fool of a King brought all his horses and all his men to set Humpty Dumpty up again, you know; and though they couldn't do *that*, they knocked the wall down, and scattered the stones all over the place. Why, you know, Pigmy-land is full of such curious monuments of the good old times! I wish they were back again, I do! Dear old days they were, when there were no railroads to drive one wild with their noise, and only respectable, bad, muddy roads, along which people could go at a decent pace of five miles an hour at most, and when, in consequence, one wasn't tempted to go away from home at all, but stayed quietly in one's own village, and ate one's food with one's fingers, instead of those horrid knives and forks which they've invented now. Yes, Pigmy-land is the place for curiosities, and things that remind you of the good old times!"

"I should very much like to see some of them, sir," said Kate, who began to be interested in the little man's conversation.

"Well!" said he, "I don't mind showing you two or three, if you'll promise to go away directly afterwards; for since you don't want to be Queen, and we don't want you, I can't see the use of a big creature like you staying here at all."

Kate readily promised; and the little man, having told his companions that they need not be afraid of her, for that she really seemed harmless, led her through the gorse to a small open space, in which was standing a building much larger than the rest, up and down before the door of which were marching two Pigmy sentries armed with bulrushes.

"This," said her companion, "is the Pigmy Museum;" and opening the door, they marched in together. The first thing which attracted Kate's attention was a large round pie-dish, apparently of common earthenware, standing on a shelf near.

"Is *that* a curiosity," she asked—"that common-looking thing?"

"It is by no means so common," said the Pigmy, "being, in fact, the only one of its kind. That is the pie-dish in which the four-and-twenty blackbirds were baked, who, after that operation, sang, left the pie, and did several wonderful things, even, it is said, to the pecking off a maid's nose, though I believe *that* to be doubtful."

"And what are those old pockets hanging up?" said Kate.

"Old pockets, indeed!" cried the Pigmy angrily; "those are the three bags full of wool, which the

black sheep had—one for the master, and one for the dame, and one for the little boy that lives in the lane. They tell me there are a good many black sheep in the world still, but they generally steal wool now instead of bringing any to a master : but times are sadly changed ! ”

Kate next observed a curious trumpet, over which was written, “ Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn ; ” and the Pigmy assured her that this *was* the very horn which the blue boy blew. Then he showed her the fiddle which the cat played when the cow jumped over the moon, and the stockings originally worn by “ my son John, who went to bed with his stockings on ; ” and the coal which Puss-cat Mew jumped over, and “ in her best petticoat burnt a great hole. ” Moreover, there was a charming model of a cottage, which the Pigmy declared to be “ the house that Jack built ; ” and there was a large old branch of a tree, which he said was the “ tree-top ” upon which the baby was rocking when the song was invented, “ Hush-a-bye, Baby, upon the tree-top. ” But perhaps the most wonderful thing was the skeleton of an enormous man, whom the Pigmy told Kate had been “ Robin-a-bobbin-a-bilberry Ben, who ate more victuals than threescore men ; ” and there he lay, side by side with many other lesser curiosities, such as the bow and arrow with which Cock Robin was killed, little Red Riding Hood’s cloak, and a shelf of the cupboard in which Old Mother Hubbard formerly sought, though vainly, for her dog’s dinner.

When Kate had looked at all these curiosities, and a great many other funny things which were in the Museum, the Pigmy politely showed her to the door, and told her that he thought she might now keep her promise, and go quietly away. Kate replied that she would certainly do so, but felt rather hungry; whereupon her companion entered an adjoining cottage, and brought out a plate, upon which he had placed two large slices of bread, which he offered her.

"Thank you," said Kate; and, seeing that he still had a lingering fear that she wanted to be Queen after all, she thought she could please the old gentleman no better than by wishing him good-bye, and marching off: which she accordingly did. But where she was to go to, or what to do, she knew no more than the Man in the Moon, nor very likely half as much, if he had been there to tell her. As he wasn't, all she could do was to walk straight on—which she did—munching her bread, and making up her mind to make the best of matters, whatever happened.

Presently she found herself upon a large open plain, the end of which she could not see, but which was soft to her feet and pleasant to walk upon. So she strolled along till she came to a spring of fresh water, which looked beautifully cool and nice; so she sat down and had a refreshing drink. As she finished, she heard the sound of some animal approaching, and, looking up, she saw a magnificent Bay Horse trotting up to the spring. As soon as he saw Kate, he stopped short and gave a loud

neigh, which she perfectly well understood to mean :
“Why, however did *you* come here?”

“That’s just what I want to know, pretty Horse,” said Kate. “Will you have a bit of my bread?” and she stretched out her hand towards the noble animal with a bit of the crumb of the bread which the Pigmy had given her; for Kate always loved horses, and this one reminded her of her own dear little Kitty at home, though he was much larger and stronger, being a real big horse, while Kitty was only a pony. The Horse moved gently towards her, stretching out his neck and looking at her very wisely till he got within reach; then he sniffed at the bread in her hand, and put his cold mouth against her fingers, and took the bread and slowly ate it; and then he gave a little start back, and said in the best and purest horse language—

“Why, it’s Kate!—it’s the horses’ friend! Have you come to be our Queen?”

Kate smiled at this, and then she said—

“Everybody seems to ask me *that* in this country. No, I don’t want to be a Queen, and I am come here I don’t know how; I thought I was in Barracks Wood.”

“Asses and zebras!” returned the Horse, “but you *must* be Queen; you *shall* be Queen; you *are* Queen! Just wait a bit, please.” And he turned round and galloped off as fast as he could go, leaving Kate there alone by the spring.

After twenty minutes or so he returned, accompanied by a number of other horses of all sorts and

So she went out as soon as she was dressed, whilst they were getting her breakfast ready ; and there she found her friend standing in front of the tent. He informed her that her loving subjects were anxious to parade before her, and go through their exercises, so that she might be able to judge of the condition and quality of those over whom she was about to reign.

She told him that nothing would please her better ; and therefore, having breakfasted off new-laid eggs and milk fresh from the cow, she walked out to the other side of the knoll, where the ground was level and the turf good.

Then and there the gallant Bay Horse marshalled before her upwards of three hundred beautiful nags, who greeted her with a joyful neigh ; then they formed in a long single line and trotted past her ; next they formed in square, and so passed again ; then they divided into two bodies, and had a kind of sham fight, one party charging the other, and then retreating. In short, they went through all the cavalry exercises you can imagine, in a manner which it would have been a fine sight for anybody to have seen who is fond of this kind of thing. Kate enjoyed it very much, and took care to tell the Bay Horse how pleased she was with her subjects.

The review lasted for more than an hour, and then Kate took a walk round the knoll, and enjoyed the fresh air and the beautiful view.

She was then and always attended by twelve horses, who followed her at a respectful distance, and

the milk-white pony, and five other ponies, were always ready when she wanted to ride. The horse-headed servants always had breakfast, dinner, and tea ready for her without any trouble of ordering any of these meals ; and, in short, there could not have been a happier, easier life, if she could but have had the home faces about her.

That was the only thing she wanted ; for although it was very sad to miss the French, and music, and all the other lessons, yet Kate could have managed to bear the loss of these, she thought, especially as there was a book-case in the tent full of amusing books, which she fancied, upon the whole, were almost as nice as the lessons. It was pleasant, too, in some respects, being a regular Queen, and giving her own orders, and doing what she liked. But then, on the other hand, although she was very fond of horses in their proper places, it didn't seem to her *quite* the thing that your servants should have horses' heads and hoofs ; and she now and then thought it would be a delightful change to have a few people about her with the common sort of heads and feet, and to be able to enjoy a little of the ordinary conversation of human beings. For the information of the horses was but limited, and, although they knew a good deal about carts and carriages, saddles and bridles, and such like things, could talk to her with great disgust about whips and spurs, and were uncommonly eloquent upon the subject of hay, oats, and beans, yet there were many

things about which Kate would have liked to talk, but to which, when she alluded, they could only answer by a neigh of ignorance. However, she did her best to be happy, and was very much beloved by all her subjects.

Meanwhile, you must not suppose that our Kate could be absent so long without being missed, and it is high time to inquire what was going on in our own old world all this time.

Ned, and Charlie, and Cecil, and Eva went on taking the jackdaws' eggs for some time, till Ned got tired, and thought he would rest for a bit: so he left his ladder and went to look for Kate. He called her, but there was no answer. He saw Kitty standing there all alone, and went up to her and called again. Still no Kate answered; for how could she, when she was at that very moment just waking up in Pigmy-land?

So Ned strolled on to the edge of the wood, and when he got outside it, lo and behold, there was the very same Old Woman whom Kate had seen, sitting in just the same position, and looking every bit the same as she had done an hour before.

"Halloo, old lady!" said Ned, "how came you here?—and have you seen Kate?"

Up sprang the Old Woman in a moment, and looked angrily at Ned.

"*You're* one of those jackdawing fellows, are you?" said she. "I know your doings, and I'll serve you as I served the girl!" And she drew herself





Ned and the Witch.

up, and was just going to say her terrible words again.

But Ned was a schoolboy, and schoolboys know a great deal about Witches and Fairies, and he saw in a moment that there was something queer about this old dame ; so, before she could say another word, he spoke boldly out, looking her straight in the face—

“ As in præsentī perfectum format in avi,
I don't see the use of a mutton-chop without any gravy.”

These words at once confused the Old Woman, for witches of her class can't stand Latin, and don't understand rhyming : so she looked very furious and trembled with rage, but never said her mysterious words.

However, she rallied in a moment, and screamed out, “ Don't think to cheat me, you rascal ! I'll soon show you what's what ! ” and raised her hand to her face to make the same sign which had had such an effect upon Kate.

As soon as she did this, however, Ned instantly made the same sign, and with both his hands, placing the thumb of the left on the little finger of the right, the thumb of the latter on his nose, spreading out all his fingers, and exclaiming at the same time in a bold and fearless tone—

“ No witch can face a scholar or a rhymer :
Confound the man who wrote the Latin Primer ! ”

And no sooner were the last words out of his mouth than a tremendous cheer broke out from the hundreds

of rabbits in the great warren close by, for, although it is not generally known, rabbits, like boys, have to learn Latin, and neither the one nor the other set of scholars have had a moment's peace since the wise masters of schools have discarded the respectable good old Eton Latin Grammar and put a Latin Primer in its place, which makes learning twice as difficult, jumbles cases and genders and tenses together in a fearful manner, and puzzles everybody who tries to master it so much, that I think it must have been the work of a witch.

However this may be, the words were no sooner out of Ned's mouth than the Old Woman flew into a more frightful rage than ever, and, seizing up the nearest stick she could find, prepared to rush upon Ned, who, on his side, drew himself boldly up, clenched his fists, and prepared to play his part like a man.

But at that very moment there stepped out of the fern a good-looking young Lady, dressed in white, with an oak-leaf crown upon her head, and a fern-plant in her hand.

"What does all this mean?" she asked: "I don't understand all this row in my country! I was nearly asleep when my rabbits woke me with their cheering; what's the matter?"

Ned took off his hat when he saw the Lady, and immediately replied, "Madam, I was looking for my sister, when this elderly person began to slang me."

"And what if I did?" answered the other; "ain't I

Queen of the Jackdaws, and mayn't I do as I like in my own place?"

"*Your* own place! I like that!" said the Lady. "Why, you evil-minded old female, you know perfectly well that I am the Fern Fairy, and this country belongs to me. I've had enough of you and your jackdaws, and I won't have you disturbing the whole place like this. Get away with you!"

Now the Old Woman was no match for the Fern Fairy; so she dared not say much, and slunk away grumbling: but as she went she cast a glance full of malice at Ned, and said aloud: "At all events, the youngster won't find his sister in a hurry, that's one good job!" and off she went.

As soon as she was gone, Ned took off his hat again, and said to the Fern Fairy, "Thank you very much, Lady, for sending that old woman away; I am very much obliged to you."

"Not at all," answered the other: "she is a troublesome old party, with whom I shall some day be obliged to take strong measures; but you would not have been hurt if you know Latin, and have your wits about you. And as you are a civil, good-mannered boy, I will help you to find your sister. You must know that I am a powerful Fairy, and can do much to help my friends. But as the old Jackdaw Queen has sent your sister right off into another sort of world, it will be necessary that another mortal should follow her in order to fetch her back. Are you willing to go?"

"Oh yes!" said Ned, "I will go anywhere to get Katie back."

"I thought so," said the Fern Fairy, with a smile; "and go you shall: and what is more, you shall get your sister back, if you only do as I tell you. Be civil to every one, consider the feelings of others, and try and make friends with those with whom you are thrown. If you are in any trouble, say the noun 'Musa' right through with a rhyme to every second case, and I will be with you before you get to the end of it."

So saying, the Fairy told Ned to pick a number of fern-plants and lie down upon the bed which he made of them. Then she stood by and waved the fern-plant in her hand over his head, slowly saying these words as she did so:—

"All the Ferns that spring and grow
Mortals vainly strive to know:
I, who know them, do declare
Queen of all the 'Maiden-hair!'
By its charms I banish pain,
Give to mortals ease again,
Give forgetfulness of woes,
Weary eyes in slumber close.
'Maiden-hair' is now o'erspread,
Boy, above thy youthful head;
Soon thy senses it shall steep
In the drowsiness of sleep.
Sleep, then, sleep, and wake to learn
The magic virtues of the Fern!"

Before the Fern Fairy had well finished her chant, Ned was as sound asleep as a top: though why people should be said to be "sound as a top" I never could

make out, since a top hums all the time it is asleep, and boys and girls do not usually hum ; but, if they make any noise at all, snore like reasonable beings.

Ned, however, did not snore, but went off into a peaceful slumber, from which he woke up very much refreshed, and looked round him with as much astonishment as Kate had done when she awoke in Pigmy-land. For there he was in nearly the same place as she had been. His bed of fern was there, for the Fern Fairy had transported him, bed and all, which was more comfortable than if he had been left on the bare ground, as poor Kate was. I wonder she didn't catch cold—but I fancy there *are* no colds in Pigmy-land. Right opposite him Ned saw several Pigmies, sitting on their camp-stools, and watching him as they had watched Kate ; and he was scarcely wide awake before the same little gentleman who had talked to his sister marched straight up to him and at once began :—“What do you want here, if you please ? Are you come to be King of the Pigmies ?”

Ned burst out laughing. “King of the Pigmies !” he said ; “I should think not. I'm come after Kate ; that's what I'm here for.”

The little man reddened with anger as he replied, “I don't see what there is to laugh at ; but as we don't want a King, it is just as well you have not come to ask for what you couldn't have. Instead of laughing like an ape, however, you had better make the most of your time, and perform the errand on which you have come.”

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Ned; "and really I did not mean to be rude, only, you know, it *did* seem rather ridiculous to wake up and be asked directly if you wanted to be King of the Pigmies."

"There is nothing at all ridiculous in the question," replied the Pigmy; "but you won't be asked again; so say no more about it. I suppose, if you are the brother of the girl who was here the other day, you will want to see the Museum, as she did?"

Now Ned didn't care much for museums, and would much rather have been asked to go and see a cricket-match; but he remembered the Fern Fairy's advice, to be civil, and think of other people's feelings; so he said he should be very glad to see the Museum: and off they went to it at once. However, Ned could by no means bring himself to believe everything the old Pigmy told him as readily and without doubt as Kate had done. He could not help asking questions and making remarks which annoyed the Pigmy, who was uncommonly proud of the Museum. For instance, he persisted in saying that he didn't believe kings would have a common earthenware dish set before them, which made him doubt whether that *was* the very same pie-dish in which the four-and-twenty blackbirds were baked; and although he might have been right enough, it was not necessary to have wounded the poor Pigmy's feelings on so tender a subject.

Then he horrified the little man by his remarks upon the skeleton of "Robin-a-bobbin-a-bilberry

Ben," observing that "the church and the steeple and all the good people," which that celebrated person is known to have devoured, must have been made of gingerbread, if, indeed, the story was true at all.

The Pigmy grew quite unhappy, but, before leaving, asked him whether he did not think that, upon the whole, it was an interesting collection of curiosities?

"Oh yes!" replied Ned, carelessly, "it is very well, you know; but I should have liked to see the shoe that the old woman lived in who had so many children she didn't know what to do; and the pail of water that Jack and Gill went up the hill to fetch; and the boots that Puss wore, and some of the oranges that 'my mother's maid' stole, and several other things I could mention."

"Well," said the Pigmy, sulkily, "a fellow can't have everything; and if you're so hard to please, you'd better be off;" and he showed Ned out of the door and left him alone.

The boy stood still for a moment, wondering what he had better do, and then walked slowly on through the gorse for some time, till he came out upon the grassy plain. About this time he began to be very hungry, but as he had not made friends with the old Pigmy, he had got no bread; and, what was more, he did not know where to find any. He strolled on, and on, till he got to the spring, where he sat down and had a drink, but was still so very hungry that he didn't know what to do. At last he bethought him of what the Fern Fairy had told him to do when in

trouble; and although he was afraid he could not do much in the way of rhyming, he knew his nouns well enough, and thought he might as well try; so he thought for a little while, and then said out loud:

“Musa, musæ,
I hungry be;
Musæ, musam,
Ay, that I am;
Musa, musâ,
No tasks to-day;
Musæ, musarum,
I cannot bear 'em;
Muis, musas,
A glass of Bass;
Musæ, musis,
A good thing is——”

“Why, who is this?” In his surprise he made a double rhyme to the last word; for as he finished it, up flew a Fern-Owl which he had not seen before, and settled down by him, having a small basket in one of her claws. Giving a friendly hoot, she at once addressed the boy in these words:

“Munch, munch,
Here's your lunch:
Bread and cheese,
If you please;
Do not fail
To try the ale;
Do not spurn
The gifts of Fern:
Munch, munch,
Eat your lunch——”

“I believe you!” said Ned. “What a brick the Fern Fairy is!”

The Owl smiled in her own peculiar way, and winked knowingly at Ned, which she continued to do all the time he was eating his lunch. The basket contained some bread and cheese and a pint of Bass' pale ale, to all of which fare Ned did ample justice, and when he had finished, put the cloth in which the victuals had been wrapped safe back into the basket, and then asked the Owl what he was to do next.

The Owl upon this flew three times round the spring and settled again, gave another hoot, and then spoke thus :

“Journey again
Over the plain ;
Then you shall meet with your sister :
Not an hour more
Passes before
Fondly once more you'll have kissed her.”

Ned jumped up, delighted at the news, and began to walk forward again directly, having first thanked the Fern-Owl, who, taking the basket again in her claw, flew off immediately. Ned went on for some way without seeing or hearing anything particular, until he perceived a number of animals a long way off, and as they came nearer, found that they were horses. Horses they were indeed ; but who was this riding at their head ? A girl on a milk-white pony, prancing along as merrily as possible, and looking as happy as could be ! Up she cantered, and as she came close to Ned, he saw it was his own dear sister, and she at the same moment recognised her brother ! She reined in

her pony directly, jumped off, and they rushed into each other's arms.

"Why, Ned," she said, "however did you get here? Did that horrid Old Woman send you?"

"No, Kit," said Ned, "no horrid person sent me." And then he told her all that had happened. Meanwhile, the horses had all gathered round, the Bay Horse at their head, and he now came up with a neigh of inquiry.

"Dear Queen," he asked, "who is this? Is he a friend of yours whom we may make welcome?"

"It is my brother," answered Kate, "and I am sure he will be very glad to hear how kindly you have treated me."

"But will he take you away?" said the Bay Horse in a trembling voice.

"Yes," answered Kate, "he has come to fetch me home; but I shall never forget my dear horses."

Then all the animals set up a neigh of sorrow, and gathered round Kate to beg her not to leave them, but to stay with her faithful and loving subjects. But she explained to them that this was impossible, adding, at the same time, that she should never forget them, and should be more fond than ever of horses for their sakes. They persuaded her to take Ned back to the knoll and let him stay there for two days, which he did, and enjoyed it much; but on the third day he and Kate agreed that the home people would be getting so anxious about them that they ought to set out. So a brown pony came for Ned, and Kate

mounted her milk-white steed, and they galloped across the plain to a place beyond the spring which was as near to Pigmy-land as the horses could go. Then the children dismounted and kissed their ponies and the good Bay Horse who had accompanied them, and who shed many tears at parting from his beloved mistress, of whom he had become very fond.

Ned and Kate walked boldly into Pigmy-land, but presently Kate said to her brother—

“I say, Ned, how are we going to get back again?”

“Well,” said he, “I don’t know; let us walk on, and if the worst comes to the worst, I must call upon our friend the Fern Fairy. I don’t want to do this, however, unless we are really in difficulty, because she told me not. But I do not think the Pigmies here will help us, for they were rather angry with me, at least the old fellow was, for not believing all their stories. Did *you* believe them, Kit?”

“I don’t know,” Kate gravely replied, “perhaps not quite every word; but I didn’t like to seem unkind by doubting the old man’s word; and, after all, those nursery stories are mostly written in books, so they *must* be true, you know.”

Ned didn’t feel quite sure, he said, about *that*, for he had met with some queer things in books sometimes, which a fellow *couldn’t* believe; and he was going on telling his sister why he didn’t believe some of the nursery tales, when a Night-Hawk came flitting by, and as he did so, gave utterance in a shrill tone to these remarkable words:

“ Who Fairy tales would understand,
Must go and dwell in Fairy-land ;
Who thinks that nurs’ry rhymes deceive,
This Pigmy-land must never leave,
Until he learns to know, forsooth,
Such legends to be always truth !”

The children stared at each other for a moment, and then Kate observed, “ There, Ned, you see you’ll have to stop here always if you don’t believe the old nursery rhymes ! *Do* believe them, for I know they *must* be true !” And Ned hardly knew what to think or say, when at that moment he saw a tall, thin, spindle-shanked man hobbling along upon crutches, and groaning as he drew himself on with the greatest difficulty. ‘The children met him, and as they did so, Kate, who had a tender heart, inquired whether he was in much pain, and whether anything could be done for him ?

“ No, my child,” replied the poor creature : “ nothing can be done, for I am past cure. I dare say you have heard of my sad history. I am old Father Long-legs, who wouldn’t say my prayers, and I have been like this ever since they took me by the hind-leg and threw me down stairs for my naughty behaviour. Oh, my dear children ! take warning by my fate, and never be naughty ; or, if you are, be sure that it is when you are upon the ground-floor.”

And as he slowly drew himself away, Kate remarked to her brother, with an air of triumph—
“ There, Ned, that proves *one* nursery story to be true, doesn’t it ?”

"It certainly looks like it," replied her brother; "but then, if I recollect the whole story right, the old gentleman was 'up-stairs and down-stairs, in my lady's chamber,' (where probably he had no right to be,) and I dare say he richly deserved being thrown over the banisters for not saying his prayers instead of attending to other matters."

"Oh, Ned!" cried Kate. "Poor old man! perhaps he wasn't just at that moment in the humour to say them properly, or perhaps they were not the same prayers that he had learned at home; and I'm sure it is not right to make people dislike their prayers by punishing them if they don't say them just how and when we like. I am quite sorry for the poor old fellow, I declare; and at all events it shows that the story is a true one!"

And the children walked on, and on, till presently they came upon a well, round which a number of Cats were walking slowly and solemnly, singing as they went, in mournful tones, "Ding dong dell, Pussy's in the well."

"What are you all doing?" said Kate to a White Kitten, who was looking on.

"Oh, don't you know?" answered the creature directly; "this is the very well the poor dear Cat fell into about whom they wrote that nursery rhyme, and as we are all descended in a straight line from her, we always come here once a year and walk round and round the well in honour of our dear old great-great-great-great-grandmother, singing these pretty words."

Kate turned round to Ned directly,—“There,” she said, “another story true, Ned, you see!”

Ned only remarked, “It don’t do to believe everything that a Cat tells you;” but Kate could see that he was surprised. They went on a little further, wandering about through the gorse country, until they came to a small house, in which they heard a strange kind of murmuring noise. They listened to it for some time, and then opening the door, perceived a large kitchen clock standing in one corner of the room, and a number of mice running up and down it, whilst others were standing and sitting about singing to each other.

“What are you playing at?” said Kate.

“Oh,” said a Mouse with a long tail, “a very, very old game in our family. One of our great yearly amusements has for centuries been to run up a clock, and when it strikes one, to run down again before the sound ceases. Have you never heard of ‘Dickory, dickory, dock, the Mouse ran up the clock’? Well, Dickory was the man on whose clock the Mice first invented the game; and what is more, tradition tells us that this is the very clock!”

“Indeed!” said Kate; “how very interesting!” And as they left the cottage, she asked Ned what he thought *now*; to which he replied that it was certainly very curious.

However, the wonders of Pigmy-land were not yet over. The children perceived at a short distance a little tablet of stone standing by the road side, up to which Kate ran to read something which she saw

written upon it. As soon as she had read it, she instantly called Ned to come and look. On the tablet was the following inscription :—

In memory of
BABY BUNTING,
Who, his father having gone a-hunting,
his mother a-milking,
his sister a-silking,
(though all with the best intentions,)
naturally perished from cold and hunger.

“There, Ned,” cried Kate triumphantly, “you see *that* song had a foundation in truth too! Don’t you believe in the nursery rhymes *now?*” And Ned was quite staggered; but, looking round, upon another tablet close by, to his great surprise, he read these words :—

Here lies the body of
JOHN HORNER,
Who, on one memorable Christmas,
having taken his Pie into a corner,
put in his thumb, pulled out a plum,
and, with a self-satisfied air,
proclaimed aloud his own merits.
Reader!
His life and Pie ended together!
Take warning by his fate—think not too
highly of yourself, and, avoiding gluttony in corners,
share your Christmas Pie with your companions!

On reading this, Ned turned round to Kate with an earnest look and said, “I see, Kit, that I was wrong

to doubt our old nursery tales. I do so no longer! This quite convinces me that they have, at least, a spice of truth in them, and are many of them probably true altogether."

"Oh, how glad I am!" replied his sister; "and now you will be able to leave Pigmy-land comfortably."

At that moment by flew the Night-Hawk again, and they both heard him say as he passed—

"Since now you own the tales are true,
The Pigmies will be friends to you;
Their kindly friendship never fails
The folk who love the Fairy tales."

"Well!" remarked Ned, "seeing is believing, they say; and now I hope all will go right with us: however, as we can't get back without help, I think our best plan will be to summon the Fern Fairy in the way she told me." So he began again—


"Musa, musæ,
Pray come to me;
Musæ, musam,
I puzzled am,
Musa, musâ,
To find the way——"

But he had got no further, when the Fern Fairy rose up out of the gorse before them. "Well, children," she said, "you see I am as good as my promise; you have both had strange adventures, but you will now soon be back at home with your friends. Do not forget the days you have passed in Pigmy-land,

and with the horses. Ned, you see how kind the animals were to Kate ; so do you remember always to be kind to them. Like human beings, you will find that they will do much more for you if you make them love you by your kindness, than if you are harsh and cruel. And as for all the proof you have had of the truth of the dear old nursery rhymes, you may depend upon this, that if every one of them is not true to the letter, there is a useful lesson to be learned and a wise moral to be drawn from each one of them. Now lie quietly down on the ground—open your mouths and shut your eyes, and see what I will give you !”

The children lay down as they were told, when the Fairy placed a large baked almond, sugared all over, in each of their mouths. They fell asleep directly, and when they woke, there they were on a bank in Barracks Wood, under the shade of one of the old oak pollards. They saw neither Fairy nor Witch, but something inside them told them it was near dinner-time ; so they walked off home as fast as they could, and found Eva and Cecil just coming down to dinner. Fine fun it was, telling all their story, and everybody was very glad to get them both back safe and sound.

• I cannot tell you just now whether they ever heard any more of the Fern Fairy, but I know that the Queen of the Jackdaws never troubled them again, and they always believed that, when she found a boy who chaffed her in Latin and rhyme, she soon afterwards left the country for good. Ever after this time you cannot wonder that Kate was devotedly



fond of horses, and if any of the other children ever felt inclined to beat their ponies, or be the least unkind to them, they left off at once when their thoughts went back to the dear old Bay Horse and the pretty kind horses and ponies they had heard of in Kate's adventures !


THE BROWN FAIRY;

OR,

EVA'S RAMBLE.

OUT away up on the hills, where the rocks were steep and high, and where few animals and no people ever came, a little spring gurgled up and sent its water trickling gently over the rocks. After years and years, before any one can recollect, and before any one has read of, the little stream from the spring had worn its way over the rocks and down the hills into the plains below. And the stream went on through the pleasant green pastures, where the sheep and lambs came down to drink out of it; and here and there, where it flowed out wider, near a bridge, or at a ford, the cattle came down in the hot weather and stood cooling their feet in the rippling water.

On and on it went, through the rich corn-lands, where the wheat bowed its head towards the rivulet, and the reapers sat down by its side and bathed their heads and drank of the sweet draught. On, till it came to a village, where it became broader and deeper, as if it knew that a great many pumps and cisterns



would want its help, and that it must put its best face on the matter and do all it could to supply them. On through the village, away into the country again for miles and miles, till it reached the large forest, and glided quietly into the shade of the grand old trees, watering their ancient roots, and cheering up the woodland glades with its pleasant ripple, just as a number of dull, stiff people are made lively and bright by some one who brings cheerful, merry talk to chase away all their shyness and formal silence with his own lightheartedness.

Not that the forest was dull or silent, though! Oh, no! No one could have said so who had ever been in it. In the morning, when the glorious sun lit up the world and roused Nature to action, the place re-echoed with a thousand voices of merry birds. The Robin sang his morning hymn, the Blackbird uttered his cheerful note, and the Thrush came as nearly up to him as he could; the Magpie chattered, and the hoarse Jay screamed; that gay dandy, the Green Woodpecker, gave his cheerful laugh as he pecked away at his favourite tree, and the stately old cock Pheasant strutted out to bid defiance to the world in his cheery, chuckling tone.


And then, as the day wore on, a million insects buzzed through the air and round the branches of the trees; and animals, too numerous to count, came out to enjoy their home scenery. The Rabbits scuttled about from hole to hole, and chased each other through the brushwood; the sly Stoat peered at them from

his lurking-place in the old pollard ; the pretty Squirrels laughed and joked over their nuts ; the Deer flapped his lazy ears, and wished the flies were at Jericho ; and the crafty Fox peeped out from his lair to have a look at the world, and to think of gathering provision for the day.

All this made the forest lively ; and this life the stream saw, and enjoyed in its own quiet way, as it wound and wound through the mazes of that lovely old wood. And at last it came to a large, large cavern, in the side of a hill which jutted out into the forest—a large cavern, but which the stream entered by a narrow little entrance, and found itself in a moment out of the wood, away from the hot glances which the sun cast down upon it whenever the foliage of the trees gave him a chance of doing so—away from the noisy, cheery life outside, in the cold, solemn silence of the deep, large cavern.

The world outside did not know what became of the stream after it had entered the cavern, and it is quite by chance that *I* ever knew it, so as to be able to tell you this story.

But at the other side of the hill, where the wood was narrower and the trees did not grow so thickly, the stream glided again out of the mountain-side, and slid through the broken ground till it came to the edge of the wood, where the trees grew fewer and fewer ; and then it took a leap and bound down into a valley, along which it rushed, broader and faster than ever, until it came to the craggy, rocky shore ;



and there it darted in among the rocks, and foamed and bounded over them like a mad thing, and ran on and on amongst them till it met the waves of the great sea, and was mixed up and lost in them, so that you could no longer distinguish it at all. It ran away from mortal sight and hearing and knowledge, just like the life of a human being, which passes through many and different scenes and changes in this world of time, until at its end it glides out into the ocean of eternity. The Life and the Stream may both be heard of by us again, but for the present both have their end.

And I was sitting on one of these rocks, and thinking of these things, and watching the stream flowing into the sea, when the story I am going to tell you was told me by a piece of Sea-weed, which had been left on an adjoining rock by the tide; and I know it must be true, because *he* had it from a Willow-branch, which came off the tree which grew in the hills where the spring rose, and which had floated down its whole course, so that he must have seen and known all about the stream and its history; and he told it to the Sea-weed before he went off to sea.

Merry little Eva! restless little Eva! with your large violet eyes and long eyelashes, and tiny feet and hands like those of your own big wax doll, and your baby face so saucy with its roguish fun—why couldn't you sit still and make daisy-chains with the other children, when the nurse brought you all down to play under the shade of the trees in the beautiful old

wood? And when nurse fell asleep over her knitting, and the other children thought it would be fine fun to steal off home, and leave her to find out that they were gone, what possessed little Eva to creep off the other way, and wander into the great wood?

Off she went, strolling along, now and then stopping to pick a pretty flower, or one of the nice fresh wood-strawberries that grew there in such numbers, and now and then gathering a bit of ivy from some old oak, that had so much that he would never miss it, but every moment getting further and further away from nurse, and deeper and deeper into the great wood.

She roamed, I don't know how far, before she felt the least bit tired; and just when her little legs began to ache a *wee* bit, she heard a little pleasant sound of running water, and came suddenly upon the cool stream, which was creeping quietly through the wood, and chuckling to itself as it rolled over the pebbles in its bed, and rippled up against the mossy banks at the side.

Then Eva sat down and watched the stream flowing on, and threw tiny twigs and bits of stick into it, and saw them float merrily away; and she stayed and rested till she began to feel rather hungry, and just a tiny little bit frightened to think that she had lost her way, and did not know how to find nurse again, or to get out of the forest. Presently she got up and walked along by the side of the stream, for it evidently wished to tempt her to follow its course,

looking so cool and so silvery, and being withal such a playful, friendly stream, almost seeming to speak as it murmured gently on in its woodland ramble.

"Walk on, walk on," it seemed to say. "Come with me, little maiden, and wander merrily through the green forest. There is no hot sun to scorch you here, as you rove along with your straw hat in your hand, and no hard road to tire your little feet. My mossy banks are soft as velvet; my water is as clear as crystal. Look at the pebbles and sand over which I am rolling; you can see them quite clearly; and, if you please, you can dip your little hands in and cool them in my stream. Come along with me, and keep me company in my pleasant journey."

And Eva walked on and on by the side of the stream, far, far into the distant woodlands, where no little girl had ever walked before, for the rippling of the water and the singing of the birds made the walk pleasant, and the wood seemed to her like the Fairy-land she had read of in story-books at home, but had never seen. And as the Squirrels chattered in the trees over her head, and the Woodpecker flew out with a merry laugh, and the Woodpigeons coo'd softly to each other in the thick oak-trees, Eva thought they seemed like playmates which the forest had lent her; and pretty, joyous playmates they were! Still on she went, until she came to a place where the ground sloped up from the stream, and was covered with strawberry-plants, whose berries were larger and richer and better than the strawberries


she had found at first, and where all looked so inviting, that the child sat comfortably down among the plants, and began to eat the fruit with a great deal of pleasure.

She had been there several minutes, making herself quite at home, when "Who picks other people's strawberries?" suddenly exclaimed a voice near her; and, looking up from her nice feast, Eva saw a figure which caused her the greatest surprise.

It was a little Lady she saw, smaller than the smallest baby that ever was born, but evidently full grown, and of a certain age; at all events, quite as much grown up as she ever would be, and having all the appearance of a person who had seen the world, and knew its ways tolerably well. Curious to see, she was dressed entirely in brown. Eva could not make out what stuff the brown was made of; but it seemed to be soft as velvet, and fell like a gown round the little figure, who moreover had a cap on her head of the same brown stuff, with the blue feathers from a jay's wing stuck in it for ornament.

She was standing a few yards from Eva when she first saw her, with her hand upon the neck of a milk-white Rabbit, from which she had apparently just alighted, as a side-saddle, also made of some brown material, was upon its back, and a bridle like silk hung over its neck.

Eva stared with astonishment, but was not the least bit frightened, because her Papa had always told her that it was of no use being frightened at anything



except at doing wrong. So she looked up, and only stared at the little Lady for a minute, without saying a word.

Then the Brown Lady spoke again.

"Who are you that pick other people's strawberries?" she said.

"I'm Eva," answered the child at once; "but how was I to know they were other people's strawberries? They seemed to grow in the wood like other strawberries do, only, to be sure, they are larger and better; but I didn't know they belonged to anybody in particular. But I am sorry if I have done wrong. Are they *your* strawberries, and how did they get to be yours?"

"They are mine," replied the Brown Fairy (for such you must have already guessed her to be), "first, because the ground on which they grow is mine, inasmuch as I have held it for many years without being disturbed by any one else claiming it; secondly, because I planted them with my own hands; and thirdly, because I have watered the plants daily with water from the stream. You are quite welcome to them, however, though you little know what you have gained by so doing."

"What is it?" said Eva, who was rather puzzled, and began to hope she wasn't going to be changed into anything disagreeable, or have her neck drawn out to a great length, or become very small, or have any of those queer things happen to her of which she had read in story-books.

"There is nothing to mind," said the Brown Fairy; "but if you have eaten six of these strawberries—and by the appearance of your mouth and hands I should imagine that six dozen would be nearer the mark—you will be able to understand the language of the birds. As, however, your accomplishments will be thus only half complete, and as I rather like the look of you, I will ask you to eat this gingerbread-nut, which will have the double effect of preventing you from feeling any discomfort from the quantity of fruit which you have eaten, and of enabling you to understand the language of beasts as well as of birds."

So saying, she handed to Eva a gingerbread-nut of the size of an ordinary plum bun, and desired her to eat it immediately.

Having so freely partaken of the good Lady's strawberries without leave, Eva felt that she could now do no less than obey, especially as she felt rather inclined for something more substantial than strawberries. She, therefore, began the nut directly, as she was told, and though she fancied that the first mouthful rather tasted of rhubarb, the taste seemed to improve at every bite, and by the time she had finished it she felt as fresh and well and strong as she ever had done in all her life.

The Brown Fairy now smiled upon her in a friendly manner, and asked her what she meant to do next, and what were her plans for the future.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Eva. "I shall never find my way out of this wood alone, and I have

nowhere to go to"—and the tears stood in her large, violet eyes.

"Don't cry, dear," said the Fairy. "You shall come home with me to-night."

On hearing this the White Rabbit squeaked once or twice, of which Eva would have thought nothing an hour before, but now, to her surprise, she could quite well understand what he said, which was this—


"Are you going to take her to the cave, dear mistress?"

"Hush! you silly fool!" said the Fairy; "don't you remember that, since she has eaten the strawberries and gingerbread-nut, she knows what you say as well as I do?"

"Butter my parsley!" rejoined the Rabbit, "so she does, to be sure!" and he spoke no more.

Then the Brown Fairy mounted him; to enable her to do which he knelt gracefully down: and when she was comfortably settled in her seat, she told Eva to walk by her side, which she soon found she could easily do without being tired; and on they travelled together by the side of the stream. Everything still looked lovely; but it all wore a new face to Eva, now that she could understand what the animals said; for it gave an entirely different colouring to many little things that happened, and she was interested in much which would never have attracted her attention before.

For instance, when the Woodpecker flew out again, and went laughing off, she heard him quite plainly



say, "There's a good job done. I've been tapping at that tree these three days, and now I'm well into it, there is the very place for my mate's nest." Then she understood that he had reason to laugh as he flew, for he had established the foundation of a home for his mate, and no doubt looked forward with pleasure to telling her all about it.

Then, when Eva heard the Woodpigeons cooing, which she had only listened to before that day as a soothing sound which made her feel peaceful and gentle at heart, she knew now that they were talking about the two little birdies on the nest of sticks at home, and wondering how soon their wings would be strong enough to bear them up and tempt them to leave their home and flutter out into the forest.

And the Blackbird, who was singing so merrily in the hawthorn-bush at the mouth of a pretty open glade which they passed by, and who, to common observers, seemed only to be making sweet music for the listener, was well heard and understood by Eva to be singing to his mate on her nest hard by; and these were his cheery words—

"Sit fast, my pretty one, sit fast on your five dear eggs in the comfortable nest which you and I have so carefully lined with hay; do not grumble at having to stay at home for a time. After all, you are better off than your neighbour, Mrs. Grey Thrush, for her nest is only lined with mud plastered down tight, which must be cold and hard compared with your comfortable hay lining. Sit fast, sweet one, and I will sing

to you here meanwhile ; and ere long the eggs will begin to chip, and the little beaks will pop out, and then the heads, and soon we shall have our children plainly before us ; and then what fun it will be to settle their names, and to fetch them tender worms for food, and to watch their wonder as their eyes begin to see, day by day, more of this beautiful world. Be patient, dear mate, it will not be long, and my voice shall ever cheer you during your watch over our precious ones."

So sang the bird, and so Eva heard him, and she was pleased to think how kind and good he was to his little mate. And as they went on by the side of the stream, the Squirrels were talking as usual overhead ; and they, too, no longer spoke in a strange language.

"How good these nuts are," they said to each other ; and then one bet the other three nuts to two that he couldn't catch him, and off they set in full chase, the one after the other, laughing and chattering all the time.

And then Eva heard the old Deer grunting, and for the first time in her life she knew that he was saying, "Confound these flies! Hash and haricot me! if I don't wish I could find a wood where there were no insects." And she laughed to hear such strange expressions from a grave and apparently respectable animal.

And the meaning of the Jay was quite clear to her, when he came with a harsh scream and flew across the stream from one side to the other, screaming still.

"We don't want children here," he said. "What does the Brown Fairy mean by bringing a child into our forest? Go back, child, go!"

But this was the only uncivil thing that Eva heard any of the creatures say, for the generality of them either said nothing at all, or made some observation which showed that the Fairy and her friend were welcome visitors.

Eva had all this time been so much occupied in listening to the birds and beasts, that she had hardly spoken to the Brown Fairy, who, for her part, was pleased to see the child amused, and would not interrupt her by talking. At last, however, they got very near to the hill into the side of which the stream dived, and the Fairy told Eva she had better take off her shoes and stockings, as she must walk in the stream itself for a little way. The child obeyed, and the Brown Fairy went first, on her Rabbit, to show the road. It was high enough over head, but the passage was narrow, so that there was not bank enough on either side to walk comfortably; but the water was shallow, and the weather being warm, it was cool and agreeable to the feet. A very few yards, however, and Eva followed the Brown Fairy out of the stream again, and then she was in the cave!

The cave was a large vaulted place, for all the world like a big room, running up into a circular dome, and right through the middle of it the stream rippled on, murmuring gently in the stillness which otherwise prevailed.

But oh, how beautiful was the cave itself! On one side of the stream it was entirely paved with rubies of the most beautiful rich red, and on the other side with the loveliest emeralds in the world, whose green was something more perfect than Eva had ever seen. The sides of the cave and of the dome up to the very top were studded with pearls of large size and magnificent appearance, and fire-flies, real or pretended, were fixed at certain distances all round, whilst a whole bunch of them hung in festoons from the centre of the dome, lighting up the cave with the clearest, purest, softest light you can imagine.

Eva was struck dumb with astonishment! she had no idea that there were so many rubies and emeralds in the world: and indeed the whole room was something too wonderful to describe. There was no carpet, but, instead of one, there was a kind of drugget, which ran round the room and across the middle on each side of the stream, made of the most exquisite ermine skins, fringed with soft, rich velvet.

A number of little men, each at least a head shorter than the Fairy, and all dressed in brown, were seated on low velvet-covered sofas against the wall, and as soon as the Fairy appeared in the cave, they rose to their feet and began to sing in the most bewitching tones—

“ Welcome back from forest glade,
Welcome, Lady of the Hill!
Ever here thine home is made,
Here thine orders we fulfil.
Here for thee a thousand Elves
Play or toil without repose.

Here we laugh among ourselves
At the mortal's griefs and woes ;
Here we have no grief to feel,
Woe to witness or to bear ;
Those who in our cavern kneel
Know no more of human care.
Vassals of the Browne we be :
Welcome, Fairy, kind and mild !
And, since she is brought by thee,
Welcome to the mortal child ! ”

Eva was more amazed than ever ! She had seen several hills in her little life, and several short people, but never a hill which had such wonderful things inside it, and never people *so* short and yet so graceful and with such sweet voices. She began to think whether other hills might be the same all the time, without people knowing it, and wondered whether she should find anything of the sort in any of the hills about home. Perhaps she would, if she could have dug down deep into them, for it is impossible to know what goes on inside these places, unless you *do* dig very deep ; and then the Fairies and Elves might be frightened away by the noise, or if not, depend upon it they would put gravel, and rock, and whatever they could, to prevent their homes from being found out by men ; and that is perhaps the reason why I never heard of anybody digging down into a Fairy Cave. But here was Eva, by good luck, brought safely into one, and you cannot wonder that she looked about her in the greatest amazement.

“ Well, my child,” said the Brown Fairy, “ how do you like my reception-room ? ”

"Oh, how beautiful!" said Eva. "*Isn't* it lovely?" and she could not take her eyes off the sight before her.

"Now," said the Brown Fairy, "I will show you my private room;" and telling Eva to follow her, she tripped lightly across the ermine-skin drugget, leaving the White Rabbit to be taken care of by the Elves.

At the further end of the room she touched a large pearl in the wall, and a small door flew open, through which she passed, and Eva after her. There they were, in another room—and *what* a room! Floor, walls, and ceiling were one mass of diamonds! Anything so brilliant Eva had not only never seen, but never imagined possible. A single jet of flame, falling from the roof, lighted the room, at one end of which was a magnificent little gold bedstead, on which lay a counterpane made of feathers from the breast of a cock pheasant, whilst on the floor was a kind of carpet, which seemed to be entirely made of brown partridge-feathers, and, on touching a spring, a canopy of the same material fell gracefully over the walls on each side, which prevented the Fairy being kept awake by the glittering of the diamonds when she wanted to sleep.

Eva was more and more surprised, and began to think she had indeed come to a wonderful place.

"Now," said the Fairy, "you shall have a night's lodging here, at all events, and you will be just as safe and snug as if you were in your own little cot at home."

Eva thanked her, though she felt that it would be impossible for her to sleep in the midst of such strange scenes, and that she should certainly lie awake the whole night thinking about them.

It was no such thing, however. The Fairy whistled ; and her whistle was for all the world like the ringing of the prettiest silver-toned bell you ever heard. Two little lady Elves immediately appeared, to whom the Fairy gave directions in a whisper. A cot was immediately brought in, so like her own, that Eva could have declared it was the same, only she knew that hers had been left quite safe in the nursery at home ; and the Elves undressed her, washed her with lavender-water all over, put her into bed, and tucked her in, all so quickly, so gently, and so quietly, that it seemed like a dream. Then the Fairy sat down at the foot of the crib, and began to sing to her—

“ Lullaby, Eva, your rambles are o’er,
Close your large eyes, since for slumber they crave ;
Offspring of mortal ne’er entered before
Into the heart of the Rivulet cave.
Sleep, for the Elves shall watch o’er thee to-night ;
Nought shall come near thee thy sleep to molest :
Soon will they chase aught of evil to flight,
Carefully guarding thine innocent rest.
Hushed are the sounds of the forest at eve ;
Dark reigns the Night with her silence complete ;
Stilled are the scenes which with daylight we leave ;
Still be my Evy, her slumbers be sweet !
Brown though the Fairy, her spirit is white ;
Loving her heart, though her dwelling be wild ;
Sweet be thy dreams in the cavern to-night,
Lullaby, Eva, my wandering child.”

And as the Fairy sung, her voice sounded to Eva like the beautiful large musical snuff-box that Mamma keeps in her morning-room, only a thousand times *more* musical and soft ; and she listened only a very little while before those sweet sounds fell so soothingly on her little ears, that they gradually heard more and more indistinctly, and she felt obliged to close her eyes, that she might have nothing to do but to try and hear ; and still she heard more and more faintly, and the light grew less and less, and the fingers of her little hand, that had clutched hold of the counterpane, opened one by one, and the hand fell down by her side, and she breathed deeply once or twice, and went off into as sound a sleep as ever little girl fell into since the first little girl that ever was born, which was before I can remember.

When she opened her eyes again, she could not for the life of her recollect where she was for some moments. She yawned, and stretched, and rubbed her eyes, and sat up in her cot ; and gradually it all came back to her, and she remembered that she had passed the night in the diamond-paved room of the Fairy Cavern. And when she was quite wide awake, she saw the Brown Fairy standing and looking at her, with such kind, friendly eyes, that she felt quite happy directly. .

“Good morning, Eva,” said the Fairy.

“Good morning, Lady,” replied Eva ; “is it time to get up ?”

“Yes, my child,” said the mistress of the room ;

"the Elves shall dress you directly, and then you shall come with me, and have breakfast in the forest ; for it is a lovely morning, and the sooner we are in the fresh air the better for both of us."

Eva was quite ready to get up, and the Elves gave her another delicious bath, this time of eau-de-cologne and water, which freshened her up amazingly ; and they dressed her as nicely and cleverly as they had put her to bed the night before.

Then the Brown Fairy took her by the hand, and led her out of the cave into the green forest again ; and there, under a tree, she saw a nice little table laid for two, with rolls, and eggs, and bread and butter, and fresh milk. There was a plate of strawberries, too, but Eva was afraid to touch any, for she thought she should be learning to understand what the insects said next, and was afraid she might get confused with so many different languages. Fancy hearing the Wasps say quite distinctly, as they buzz over the breakfast-table, on a bright September morning—

"Honey, honey ; give me honey ! and let me settle on the peaches directly ! or I'll sting you in half a minute !"

It would make one's breakfast very unpleasant to be threatened in such a manner, or to hear the Flies boasting that they had been sitting for half an hour on the cold sirloin of beef from which you were just going to cut a slice. However, this was not to be Eva's fate. The strawberries knew nothing of the

insect language themselves, and could therefore teach it to nobody else ; and the Brown Fairy told Eva that she might eat what she liked without fear, for all she saw was plain, common, mortal food, which the Elves, out of compliment to the mortal child, had brought from a neighbouring farm in time for breakfast.

“ My Elves,” said the Brown Fairy, “ are very clever fellows, and they can do almost anything you ask them. Is there anything you would like them to do for you, Evy ? ”

Eva thought for a moment, and then very gravely replied—

“ Burn all the lesson-books.”

The Fairy laughed loud at this in her silvery tones. “ But,” said she, “ there are no lesson-books out here, you know ; and those you have at home are to make you good and wise, and to teach you many useful things, which you would never learn without them. Besides, if you try to like your lessons, and take an interest in them, you will be surprised to find how pleasant they become, and how soon they are over.”

“ Very likely,” replied Eva ; “ but I like the strawberry way of learning best. I wish I could learn everything by eating strawberries, like I learnt the language of the birds and beasts. How hard I would try to work then ! Why *can't* I learn French like that ? ”

“ Because, my dear,” answered the Fairy, with a smile, “ I have not the same power over the French

as I have over the birds and beasts, though it might be better for all parties if I had. But although this lesson-book burning will hardly do, my Elves shall amuse you by dancing in the Fairy ring."

The Brown Fairy then gave a signal, and out tripped a quantity of little Elves, who, ranging themselves hand and hand in a circle, went round and round so fast that it made Eva quite giddy to look at them. Suddenly they stopped, and in a moment all stood on their heads, and so danced round again, though not quite so fast. Then they let go each others' hands, turned head over heels, jumped through small hoops, and went through all the tricks which you see the acrobats do at a fair, or in the streets, where (which is generally the case) there is no policeman to prevent their interrupting the traffic.

This all pleased Eva very much; and she was still more amused when the Elves Circus Company performed before her, Rabbits being used instead of horses, who raced merrily round, and appeared to enjoy the sport as much as the Elves themselves. After this had gone on for some little time, the Brown Fairy gave the signal to stop, and, turning to Eva, said—

"Now you shall see the stables."

She walked along the side of the hill for a little way, and presently came to a rock jutting out of the hill like the nose out of a man's face. She touched a secret spring in this rock, and a door opened immediately. The Brown Fairy told Eva to follow her,

and, stepping through the door, they entered a large stable, in which stood more than a hundred Rabbits, in different stalls, with silk clothing on, and attended to by several Elves, who were running about with their brown coats off, carrying sieves of bran and other things pertaining to stable life.

"These are the horses," said the Fairy, "on which my Elves go out at night—and rare good ones they are too!"

Eva looked, and saw that they were evidently well-bred Rabbits, of perfect shape, and beautifully groomed. They pawed the ground proudly, and twitched their tails as their mistress approached; and she fed several of them with parsley, which they ate out of her hand. Eva felt that from henceforth she could never enjoy roast-rabbit again; while to touch rabbit and onions would be for ever out of the question.

When they had had enough of the stables, they went out again upon the hill, which was not a bare hill by any means, but had plenty of trees upon it, and was altogether a pleasant place. Seating herself under a pink thorn-tree, upon which the blossoms seemed to Eva fuller and prettier than she had ever seen blossoms before, the Fairy announced that the time had come when she received visitors, and heard any complaints which anybody chose to bring before her.

"Now that you understand the language of all the creatures," she said, "you can stay and listen, if you

please ; or you may play about by yourself, if you had rather do so."

Eva preferred to stay, for she had never seen anything of the sort before, and was curious to know what would happen. A Stoat was first brought up, struggling violently between two Elves, who held him tightly, and said that they had found him in the very act of killing one of the Fairy's rabbits.

"What say you to this, Stoat, of which the Elves accuse you?" asked the Fairy, in a cold, stern voice.

"I know nothing about Elves, or Fairies either, for the matter of that," screamed the Stoat. "Nature bids me eat when I am hungry, and points out rabbits as the best and most wholesome food. Whose the rabbit is I have no means of knowing; but if I mayn't catch my natural prey, how in the world am I to live?"

"Hang him up at once!" said the Brown Fairy angrily. "The lying fellow knows a Fairy rabbit from any other very well, and also that he has no right to hunt within a mile of the Rivulet cave. Away with him directly!" and in spite of the yells and struggles of the miserable wretch, he was speedily hung up to the withered branch of a stunted oak that stood near, where several of his race, and a cat or two, were already hanging, which everybody supposed had been done by the gamekeepers, who in truth never came near the place, but the Elves were the real executioners.

No more of such murderous affairs came before the Fairy that morning, but there was a dispute between two Jackdaws who had built their nests in the same tree, and each claimed it for her own.

"I was there first," said one. "But I laid the first egg there," rejoined the other. And they jabbered nineteen to the dozen.

The Fairy asked them if they would be satisfied that one should have the nest and the other the eggs; but as this wouldn't do, she directed them to choose different hours for laying their eggs, and when it was time to begin sitting, to do so on alternate days, and bring up the young birds together. This satisfied them for the time, and they flew off together, still chattering loudly. Then came the Cuckoo to complain that the Jay had sucked her egg, but the blue-winged bird brought two Magpies, who swore that in the first place the Cuckoo had laid her egg in another bird's nest, which she had no business to do, and could not therefore complain; and that in the next place she herself had been engaged in egg-sucking to a considerable extent during the last few weeks.

The Fairy sternly rebuked the Cuckoo for this unprincipled conduct, and told her, that although she could not approve the conduct of the Jay, her own behaviour in cruelly abandoning her offspring made it very doubtful whether she ought not be punished. So the Jay flew merrily off with his friends, and the Cuckoo left the wood instantly, for fear of evil consequences if she stayed in it.

Several other cases followed ; but Eva got tired of listening ; so she strolled down along the hill-side and began to pick flowers and strawberries. Presently she fancied she heard voices near her, and in another moment she became sure of it. She remained quite quiet for a little while, and then she found that the voices came from above her head, and, looking up, she saw several Starlings talking together, and what was more, she felt certain they were talking about her.

"That child seems very happy in the forest," said one.

"Yes," rejoined another, "as happy as possible, I should think. But then she doesn't know how miserable they are at home about her."

"No," chimed in a third, "I'll be bound she doesn't. Why, one of the old Rooks that fly home over the forest every night told me, as he returned to his work this morning, that her father had ridden half over the country for her, her mother had cried all night, her sister had said she would rather have lost her own little white dog, and her little brother had refused his apple-pie at dinner, which was a thing he had never been known to do before."

When Eva had heard as much as this, she jumped up from the ground, and burst into tears.

"Oh dear, oh dear," she cried, "what shall I do! Here I have been sleeping, and playing, and seeing all the pretty things, and amusing myself, and never thinking about them at home, and how they must have been looking for me!"

And the tears ran down her little cheeks, and she felt perfectly miserable.

Whilst she stood there crying, up came the Fairy.

"What is the matter, little one?" said she; and Eva told her what she had heard.

"I have a great mind," said the Fairy, "to punish those gossiping Starlings; they have made a great deal out of nothing at all. It is quite true that they were rather alarmed at first when you did not come home with nurse; but it is all right now. Your father is an old and dear friend of mine. I am often with him in his dreams; and many and many a pretty story have I put into his head to tell the children. I have promised him—in a message which I sent off by an Elf last night—that you shall be home to-day, and there is nothing to cry about."

So the Brown Fairy dried Eva's tears with her own pocket-handkerchief, and kissed her twice on the left cheek, which Fairies only do to those they love. Then she took her by the hand and led her through the dear old forest again, and as they went she showed her many pretty and curious plants and flowers, and told her their names, which she immediately forgot, for she was more interested in the birds and beasts, to whose conversation she kept listening even more than to that of the Fairy. And she told her about them too, and how that every creature was made to do some good in his own way, and was sent into the world for some wise purpose. She told her, too, that there were many more beautiful things in creation,

which she had never seen, and many which mortal eye can never see or mortal tongue describe. "But," said she, "the way to make things seem beautiful, and to see and understand all that *is* beautiful in the forest, as well as in the outside world, is to keep in your bosom a heart full of love for the good God and for His creatures ; to love Him who has made all these animals, and to be kind and gentle to them for His sake ; and then, although the sun may not always be shining upon you, nor the sweet voices of the birds be for ever singing in your ears, you will have a cheerful songster inside who will make your life bright and happy, and at last your eyes will come to see things more lovely and wonderful than anything which you have seen in the green forest or the Rivulet cave."

Then the Fairy kissed Eva again, and led her to the edge of the forest, and bade her good-bye. And Eva kissed her, and thanked her for all her tender care, and trotted off home all the better for her strange day and night in the Forest of the Stream.

And when she got home, she found her Father waiting for her, not at all frightened, since he knew where she had been from the Fairy's message. Rather more alarmed was her Mamma ; but then she did not know so much about Fairies as the Father, who had loved them and their stories from a child. Right glad, however, were all to see her, and the delight of her sister and brother knew no bounds. The former declared that the Starlings were quite right, and that she would rather have lost her little dog Fifine than

her sister, whilst the latter said little, but had two helpings of apple-pie at dinner to make up for the day before. And Eva never forgot that forest ramble. She often remembered all the wise advice which she had received whilst she was there, and she determined to try and grow up to be such a good and loving woman that she might show that she had taken closely to her heart the lessons which had been so pleasantly taught her in the Rivulet cave by the Brown Fairy !

THE FOUR PIGS.

THERE was once an old Sow who was troubled with so many little pigs that she could no longer comfortably maintain her whole family in the farm-yard. As she had always occupied a respectable position in society, she by no means relished the idea of descending to poverty, and, after much consideration, came to the conclusion that her best plan would be to turn some of her children out into the world to shift for themselves. She therefore assembled the whole of her numerous offspring, and, after lamenting the necessity of acting with such apparent harshness, told them her fixed determination ; and that, in order to prevent any one of them thinking that he was treated unfairly, she would cast lots between them all, and thus decide who should stay and who should go. There was much squeaking and squealing among the youngsters after their mother had ceased speaking ; but they knew her too well to doubt for a moment that she meant what she said, and therefore soon ceased their cries, and prepared to undergo the trial which she had ordered. Now, there are several ways of casting lots among pigs, as indeed among other animals ; but the

way which the old Sow selected was, that the tails of all her little ones should be measured, and the four who were found to have the shortest tails should be those chosen for banishment. This was accordingly done under the superintendence of an old Foxhound, who lived in a comfortable kennel in the farm-yard, and whose honest, straightforward character was far above any suspicion of unfairness. After a most careful examination and measurement, he announced that there were four pigs whose tails were decidedly shorter than the others—these four were named Jerry, Becky, Obby, and Sally ; and it was therefore these who had to leave the home of their childhood, and to go forth into the wide world to gain their own livelihood. It was agreed that their departure should take place upon the following day, and when the fated hour arrived, the old mother, having obliged all her other children (not without some little murmuring) to give up their share of hog-wash to those who were about to depart to lands where hog-wash might be scarce, summoned them to her presence, and gave them much advice as to the conduct which they should pursue in the future which lay before them.

“You know, my children,” said she, “that within a short distance of this farm-yard is the large wood to which I have often rambled with you on a summer’s day. It is a pleasant place, though I do not know its extent ; but there is plenty of food to be found there in the spring, summer, and autumn, enough to enable a wise and frugal pig to lay up a good store

against the winter. To this wood I would advise you at once to betake yourselves, for not only will you find food and shelter, but the farmer is unlikely to seek you there, and if your absence is discovered, you will be supposed to have been lost or stolen. But do not think that all will be pleasure and happiness in your new life. You must be prepared to meet enemies, against whom you must be constantly upon your guard. The worst and most dangerous of these are the foxes, of whom you have sometimes heard me speak. A fox is the natural enemy of our race. He eats us when we are little, and despises us when we are old. Moreover, he is gifted with such extraordinary cunning, that it is very difficult to avoid being deceived by him. Never, therefore, my children, trust or believe a fox, but act with wisdom and caution in your conduct in the wood."

So saying, the old Sow gave her blessing to her four children, affectionately bit each one's ear till he squealed again, and packed them off out of the yard without further ceremony. Now these little pigs were animals of different dispositions and characters. Jerry, the eldest, was a pig of sterling common sense, fond of judging for himself, but never doing so without careful thought, and ready to take good advice when it was given him. His sister Becky was a brighter pig than her brother in the way of genius, and a better or wiser friend he could scarcely have had. Perhaps she was a little too fond of dictating to the younger pigs of the family, but upon the whole

she was as good a specimen of an elder sister as you would wish to see. Obby was a pig resolute even to obstinacy—brave enough, but somewhat foolhardy, and of a dullish temperament ; while little Sally over-matched him both in greediness and folly, and was one of the most empty-headed, giddy little pigs that ever came into a sty. These were the four who left the farm-yard of their forefathers, and commenced the independent life of which I am about to relate the history.

They sallied forth boldly from the yard-gate, and walked up to the wood. It was a warm and pleasant afternoon, and under the spreading beech-trees the nuts lay in plenty ; so, after they had walked and played off the effects of their extra allowance of hog-wash, they fell to and made a hearty meal ; after which they began to feel uncommonly sleepy. Where to sleep was the next question ; and, looking round, they perceived a tree near them whose branches drooped upon the ground, so as to form a large space underneath them, where hundreds of pigs could have assembled without any inconvenience. The four wanderers therefore crept in under these branches, and finding plenty of dry leaves, collected enough to make a good bed, and then, cuddling all together, as pigs like to do, they turned round and round till they were quite cosy and comfortable, and fell fast asleep.

I do not know how long they had slept, when a noise of some kind—or perhaps a dream (if pigs *do* dream ; and I don't see why they shouldn't do so as

well as children, for it is well known that dreaming generally comes from indigestion, and pigs as well as children eat all the indigestible things they can get hold of)—however, something—noise or dream—at all events woke Jerry, and he raised his head a little and pricked up his ears. Yes; it was certainly a voice, and that not very far off either; and it spoke words which made his blood run cold.

“Yes,” it said, “I certainly *do* smell pig, and there must have been one here very lately.”

“Oh!” replied another voice, “those young grunTERS from the farm are always out here after the beech-nuts, and no doubt they have been here this evening; that is what you smell; but it is late, and they must all have gone home now. I dare say we shall catch some of them one of these days.”

Jerry trembled all over, so that he woke Becky: but she was fortunately too wise a pig to scream; so she only trembled too, especially when the other voice answered—

“I can’t help thinking there must have been a pig here *very* lately, and I feel as if I should like a morsel of pork uncommonly to-night.”

The voice, the tone, the terrible words, alike convinced Jerry and Becky that they were listening to a Fox, and inexpressible was their joy when they heard the other voice reply—

“Well, come along; don’t let us dawdle here all night, or we shall get no supper;” and the sound of retreating footsteps encouraged the two pigs to peep

cautiously out from their hiding-place, and there, sure enough, they perceived two foxes walking away from the tree under whose shelter they had been sleeping.

"Oh!" said Becky, "what an escape we have had, and how foolish of us to go to sleep in that way under a tree; but don't let us wake Obby and Sally until the foxes are quite gone, for they will be sure to scream, and that might bring them back again."

So they waited till the foxes had been out of sight for some time, and then they woke the other little pigs, and told them how near they had been to their deadly enemies. Obby and Sally were dreadfully frightened, and wanted to run wildly away. However, they were kept quiet by their wiser brother and sister, and the four pigs remained, trembling and sleepless, under the tree, until it was broad daylight. They then sallied forth, ate a hearty breakfast of beech-nuts, and marched off into the wood upon their further travels.

After journeying some way, to their great delight they perceived a cottage, towards which they made their way, and on reaching it found it was one in which no one seemed to have lived for some time—perhaps wood-cutters had occupied it for a while, or it might have been the house of a gamekeeper at some time or other; at all events, there was no one there now—and this the little pigs thought would make them a capital home. They accordingly occupied themselves in gathering together as many dry leaves as possible, and made a very comfortable bed upon the floor.

Before, however, they retired to rest (though they very much wanted a snooze after their walk), Jerry and Becky determined to see that all was secure, and fortunately found that they could easily shut the door. This they accordingly did, and afterwards enjoyed a comfortable nap without any disturbance. It was well on in the afternoon when they awoke, and Sally did so in a flood of tears. Her brothers and sister asked her what was the matter, but for some time received no answer but sobs, till at last a low murmur of "hog-wash" revealed the truth. The little greedy pig had been dreaming of the dainty messes of the farm-yard, and awoke to the consciousness that they were no more for her ; and this had caused her tears. Becky administered a bite on the ear for her folly ; after which they determined that the best thing to do was to make a meal from the nuts which had fallen from the neighbouring trees, and afterwards to collect provisions which they could store in their house. Accordingly they ate as much as they wanted, and then proceeded to gather together a quantity of beech-nuts and chestnuts, which they carried safely into the house. Moreover Jerry, to his great delight, discovered a potatoe garden, in which many potatoes had been left, which added greatly to their stores. They had worked hard all the afternoon, and were beginning to get tired, when, as the shades of evening came creeping on, Obby and Sally began to work more and more lazily, and got nearer and nearer to the door of the house. It was at this moment that the

sharp eyes of Jerry caught sight of a Fox coming quietly down the green ride towards them. He called instantly to Becky, and, dropping their last load of nuts, they ran towards the house, calling to Obby and Sally to go in. The latter was just going to complain of being hurried and ordered about, when she too caught sight of the Fox, who, finding that he was seen, had quickened his pace considerably. She gave a loud scream, and, darting into the house, would actually, in her fright, have shut the door in the face of the others, had not Obby fortunately had sufficient good sense to prevent her. Jerry and Becky followed quickly, and had just time to shut the door, when the Fox came trotting up to it. First he tried to open it, but the lock was too good for him; then he knocked gently.

"Mr. Pig," said he, in his kindest and softest tones. There was no answer, for Jerry had given the other pigs the strictest orders that no reply whatever should be given.

"Mr. Pig," again said the Fox—"Mr. Pig, I know you are at home, for I saw you go in at the door. Probably, as a stranger in this wood, you do not know the good and friendly terms upon which all we animals here live in it. Pray allow me the pleasure of introducing myself to you and to your interesting family."

Still no reply. The Fox became a little impatient, and knocked again.

"Really, Mr. Pig, this is very extraordinary be-

haviour. One would hardly suppose you had been used to polite society. Pray let me in. Indeed, I think I have a family relic which you would like to have. This silk purse was, I believe, made out of your grandmother's ear, and I should be so glad to restore it to you."

Now Jerry, who was by no means an ignorant pig, and had known from his childhood, from hearing his mother say it, that nobody *can* make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, was more sure than ever that the Fox was a knave. He therefore whispered to his sisters and Obby to be silent still, and patiently waited to see what would happen next.

The Fox became quite angry soon, and rattled the door, but to no purpose; then he leaped up to the window—but it had bars, and he could not get in *that* way; then he crept quietly round the house, but found it was of no use: so he came back again to the front door, and said, in a loud and angry tone—

"Well, Mr. Pig, since you refuse to be friends, or even to be commonly civil to a neighbour, you must take the consequences."

Then he pretended to go away, but really he lay down near the house, in hopes that the pigs would think he was gone, and venture out again. Finding, however, that they did not do so, at last he really took himself off.

Jerry now called the others round him, and told them they must at once take counsel together as to what it would be best to do. Sally said, "Run

away ;" and Obby, "Go to sleep ;" but the two elder pigs told them that matters were really too serious for trifling. It was quite certain that, now the Fox knew where they had taken refuge, he would either try to take them by surprise, or would call some of his friends and attack their house. The first rule, therefore, which Jerry and Becky made was, that neither of the others should go out alone. It was pretty certain that no single fox, unless desperate, would attack four pigs together, and probably few foxes would like to tackle more than one pig at a time. They therefore agreed that they would go out two at a time as much as possible, leaving the other two to keep the house safe. Then came the question, *Was the house safe?* If not, how could they make it *more* safe? The door fastened close and well, and the back-door was so fast that they could not open it themselves. In the back part of the house there were such small windows, and so high up, that no danger was to be feared, and the only weak point, as it first struck Jerry, was the front window, on the right-hand side of the door as you approached the house. A fox, standing on his hind-legs, could almost peer into the room, and one fox standing on another's back, or on a chair, could easily do so. Then the bars, though pretty strong, were old, and Jerry did not feel certain about them. However, they were too close together for a fox to creep between them, and Jerry determined to have some cross-bars put up as soon as possible.

Inside the house they had now a good stock of food, and they were well off for bedding ; but there would be more food to get, and many little things required for the house-keeping of a respectable pig were not yet obtained. One thing was in the cottage which they hoped to turn to some account. It was a very large round tin vessel, with a cover to it, in which they could have boiled a sheep, if pigs ate sheep : but as they don't, and our pigs were therefore unlikely to require it for that purpose, they looked forward to occasionally varying their food by boiling some of the nuts and potatoes in it ; for there was an excellent pump in the back part of the cottage, where also there was a copper and an oven.

Very early next morning the four pigs were up and about, and Jerry decided that Becky and Obby should go out that day, leaving him and Sally to keep house, and to gather together more nuts and potatoes. Accordingly the two pigs trotted off, there being little fear of foxes so long as they kept to the broad tracks and were only out in the bright daylight. They soon left the wood, and came to the nearest pig-sty they could find, where a respectable pig named Toby kept a shop, at which all kinds of things which pigs require could be bought. Becky therefore purchased needles and thread, some preserved hog-wash lozenges, some essence of cabbages, and many such like articles, with which she loaded Obby and herself, and they set off home. They travelled slowly, on account of their bundles, and it was afternoon before they

got near their cottage. Just as they were beginning to feel that home was near, and were about to turn out of the broad track into the narrow path which led to the cottage, they were almost startled to death by a voice, which said, quite close to them—

“Good evening, Miss Pig ;” and, lo and behold ! there was a Fox close to them !

Obby gave a squeak of affright at once ; but Becky checked him by a frown, which he well understood ; and seeing at a glance that this was a young Fox, who would probably be afraid to attack two pigs together unless he had friends near him, determined to be as civil as possible.

“Good evening, sir,” replied she in her pleasantest grunt, though in reality she trembled at heart.

“Pray let me carry your bundle for you, Miss Pig ?” rejoined the Fox.

“Oh dear no, sir ; pray don’t let me trouble you,” said Becky ; “we are so very near home that I can manage quite well for myself, thank you.”

“Oh yes, let me help,” again said the Fox ; and he came very near to Becky, who, although she grew more and more frightened, bethought herself of a trick by which she might get rid of her enemy.

“Pray walk first, sir,” she said ; “up this little path to the left is the way to our house.”

“I always walk *behind* ladies,” said the Fox, who thought that if he could get safely behind Becky he could spring upon her back and have her at his mercy.

"Indeed, sir," said she, "I couldn't allow it; and besides, here we are close home, and I expect a dear old friend of mine, a very famous Foxhound, who lives with us, to come and meet us. In fact, I hear him coming now—Here, Merriman! Merriman!" And Becky began calling out to the Hound as if he was there; but before the words were out of her mouth the Fox had bolted back into the broad track and was off as hard as he could go, for he knew what he should have to expect if he met the Hound.

"Now, Obby," said Becky, "help with the bundle, and run as fast as you can." And Obby, who was thoroughly frightened, did as he was bid, and they ran quickly along the path till they came to the cottage.

Jerry and Sally met them at the door, and in they ran, quite tired out, so that it was some time before they could tell their adventures. Jerry shook his head sadly, and, whilst he complimented Becky upon the wisdom she had shown, remarked that it was but too clear that their life in the wood would be one full of difficulty and danger. These, indeed, were even nearer than he thought; for the pigs were awakened during the night by a whispering noise, and, on peeping through the keyhole, Jerry perceived two foxes in close consultation; and though no further disturbance occurred, he knew but too well that the enemy was on the alert, and that great care and watchfulness would be necessary.

The next day was passed in putting the house to rights, and making everything as comfortable as

possible. Meanwhile, Jerry and Becky had laid their heads together, and made several plans, the result of which will appear hereafter. Towards evening, they called the other two pigs to help them fill the copper; and having done this, Becky lighted the fire, and soon had a good supply of warm water, in which, she said, they could boil their potatoes when they pleased. This delighted Obby and Sally, and a boiled meal made them go to bed in the highest spirits.

But it was not long before a bite on the ear made Obby awake with a squeal. It was, however, only Jerry, who bade him be quiet, and come instantly and help in a matter of life and death. Sally was also awakened in the same manner; and they were both too frightened to do anything but obey meekly.

Jerry told them that he had been roused by noises which he clearly perceived came from the roof, and that he was persuaded that a Fox was trying to creep down the chimney. He therefore ordered the other pigs to help him, and having filled the large tub quite full of boiling water, and put the cover on to keep the heat in, they drew it close up to the fireplace, and all kept the strictest silence.

Presently they heard the same noise in the chimney which had alarmed Jerry. Evidently something or somebody was trying to come down from the roof, and it could be with no friendly intention. They heard the hard breathing of the animal as it cautiously descended; and Becky, who had her sense of smelling finely developed, declared in a whisper to Jerry that

she could plainly perceive by the smell that a Fox was near!

Still they waited patiently and tremblingly, till a sudden and quicker movement in the chimney assured them that the creature would be down in an instant. As quick as thought, Jerry and Becky whipped off the cover of the tub; and hardly had they done so when their enemy floundered down the chimney, slap bang into the boiling water, which, as he had by no means expected so warm a reception, must have been far from a pleasant surprise.

Without losing an instant, Jerry and Becky popped the cover of the vessel on again, and, jumping up, sat upon it to keep it down, calling upon Obby and Sally to do the same; which they accordingly did. The united weight of the four pigs kept the lid firmly on, in spite of the furious exertions of the unhappy Fox, whose screams and groans were frightful to hear. However, the water was so hot, and the lid fitted so tight, that his breath and strength soon gave way together, and his cries entirely ceased.

Not yet, however, did the prudent Jerry leave the lid, but sat there until the young ladies began to complain that their tender skins could bear the heat no longer. Then, at length, did Jerry give the word of command, and having all jumped down, they carefully removed the lid. There, indeed, was a Fox, but perfectly dead; and, in fact, as completely boiled as a neck of mutton, only with no turnips and carrots round him. Never more would he attempt to descend

honest people's chimneys, or trouble quiet little pigs who had never interfered with him or desired his acquaintance. The conquerors looked at each other, quite alarmed at the complete success of their trick, and Sally burst out sobbing and crying for mere fright at the appearance of the dead Fox.

The other fox, or foxes, had probably scampered off as soon as the noise inside the house proved that the pigs were not caught unprepared, and no more was heard of them for the rest of the night. But as pigs cannot return the civility of foxes by eating them, Jerry and Becky had now to get rid of the animal as best they could, and they were rather puzzled how to do it. However, the remains of an old wheelbarrow were found in the garden, and, when morning came, the pigs emptied the water out of the vessel which had served them so well, hoisted (though not without difficulty) the body of the Fox on to the wheelbarrow, and, trundling it some little way from the cottage, left it among the leaves and brambles, and quietly returned.

For several days they heard no more of their crafty neighbours, who were doubtless much alarmed at the death of their relative. However, not long after this, whilst Jerry and Becky were busy in the house, Obby asleep (having eaten too many nuts, and having to sleep off the effects), and Sally playing in the front of the house, a shrill scream from the latter roused the two elder and wiser pigs, and, running to the door, they met their sister rushing in, with a Fox in such close pursuit that they had barely time to shut the

door in his face ; and even as it was, he made a snap at Sally as she rushed in, and, catching her by the tip of her tail, bit at least two inches of it off as clean as if it had been cut by a knife !

Sally's shrieks and screams were such, that Jerry could only stop them by threatening to hand the rest of her, tail and all, over to the Fox, unless she left off howling ; which at last she did, though she told her brother that she thought him very unfeeling. It seemed, from her account, that the Fox had stolen upon her whilst she was at play, and was close to her before she was aware he was near. Then she ran for it, but only just in time.

Jerry now knew that the danger was by no means over, and he racked his brain to discover some way in which he could defeat his foes. The worst of it was, that he never knew when or how they would attack the cottage ; and although one pig sat up every night to give the alarm if anything should occur, yet, as Obby and Sally were much given to going to sleep whilst on duty, this fell rather hard on the two elder pigs, who soon began to look pale and careworn for want of rest, not to mention their constant mental anxiety.

Several nights, however, had passed away without any disturbance, and the days had been occupied in collecting food, and in planting a few potatoes for the next crop, when it chanced, one evening, to fall to Obby's turn to keep watch. Obby meant well enough, but the heavy supper which he always ate (when he

could get it) made him but too liable to take an after-supper nap at the very moment when he should have been widest awake. And so to-night, when, full of potatoes and nuts, he sat down to watch, the shadows seemed to grow darker and darker, and the snoring of his sisters and brother was an enticing example, and his head fell a little, first on one side and then on the other, and he winked and blinked and nodded, and he nodded and winked and blinked, until at last he fairly went off into a sound sleep.

It was towards the middle of the night when Becky suddenly awoke with a start, and sat up in the leaf-bed. She was sure she had felt something move. What could it be ?

Many pigs would have settled in their own minds at once that it was only a mouse—or a dream ; and would have turned themselves round to sleep again without thinking any more about it. Becky, however, was too wise a pig for this. The moon was shining brightly in at the window, and by its light she saw the watcher Obby fast asleep at his post. She listened attentively. There was certainly a noise, and it seemed to come from below ! In an instant the thought flashed across her that a Fox had burrowed in the ground, and was scratching his way up, so as to come through their floor, which was only of earth, and thus obtain an entrance into the cottage. She woke Jerry immediately, and a little movement of the earth underneath them convinced both the pigs that Becky's guess was right.

Nor was there much time to be lost, for the noise and the shaking of the earth showed that the invader was not far off.

Jerry remembered to have seen an old bill-hook, which had evidently been used for cutting wood for the fire, in a corner of the cottage, and in a moment he stole off and quietly armed himself with this, while Becky seized hold of a small but heavy saucepan which she had found in the kitchen. They waited in trembling anxiety for a few minutes, and still the noise continued. Nearer and nearer there seemed to come a scratching kind of sound, and at last they plainly saw the earth moving, close to them, more and more; and presently the foot of some animal appeared, scratching the earth downwards.

Jerry had lifted his weapon, but Becky made a sign to him not to strike, for she rightly judged that the foot might be quickly withdrawn in the very act of scratching, and no great harm might be done to the enemy. They therefore waited for a few moments longer, when some of the earth fell in, and the head of a Fox was slowly pushed up through the opening which he made.

In an instant the saucepan of Becky descended right upon his nose, whilst Jerry struck him with the bill-hook with his full force on the forehead, and as he was stunned for a second, Jerry repeated the blow directly, and the Fox drew back his head with an awful groan.

“Fill the saucepan with hot water directly, Becky!”

said Jerry ; and she ran to do it : but the Fox was not to be seen when she came back. They heard a moaning and scuffling sound below ; but though they poured water down the hole, they heard no more of the robber.

Obby was now awake, and to him Jerry administered a severe whipping for his negligence, which might have caused destruction to them all. There was no more sleep that night, and early in the morning they went outside the house, and there, sure enough, they found the hole where the Fox had scratched his way down. He had evidently crawled out again, for they found blood at the mouth of the hole, and tracked it some little way into the wood ; but as they found no further signs of him, they supposed he had managed to creep away.

Jerry was now obliged to consider how they might best be protected against this new sort of attack, and, after some consultation, they determined that the floor must be paved. Accordingly, they sent immediately to a venerable Hedgehog who lived near, whom they had met during their rambles in the wood, and explained to him the circumstances of the case. He told them at once that he would, with his two sons, grub and prepare the floor for them, and, being rather proud of his distant relationship to the Pig family, would be very moderate in his charge for the work.

"Then," he said, "you had better employ the Squirrels and Rabbits to put you down a good strong pavement."

They took his advice, and having called in the tradesmen whom he recommended, the Squirrels brought a large number of fir-cones and nut-shells, and the Rabbits assisted them in plastering these down so tightly upon the floor, that they soon had beneath them a defence strong enough to resist the attack of any one bold enough to seek an entrance in the same crafty manner as their last midnight plunderer. They now felt tolerably safe ; and as repeated dangers had placed them all upon their guard, and as, at the same time, they knew that the more they kept together the less likely they were to be attacked, they began to go out three at a time, leaving the fourth to keep house.

Several days passed quietly away, until one morning Jerry informed the others that the Hedgehog had told him of a bank at a little distance from their house, where, under some fine old beech-trees, which grew there in great numbers, truffles were always to be found.

Now as pigs, not unlike certain human beings, have a tender regard for truffles, Jerry thought it quite worth while to make an expedition in order to forage for this delicate food ; and he therefore proposed that this should be done. It was desirable that Becky should go, as her keen sense of smell would render her a valuable assistant in the search ; and Jerry felt it right that he should accompany her, as he not only knew the exact spot best, from the instructions of the Hedgehog, but, being the strongest pig, would be

able to carry home more of the precious vegetables, if they were fortunate enough to discover them.

With tears in his eyes, Obby begged to be of the party. The very word "truffle" had charms for this greedy little pig, and so hard did he beg, that Jerry and Becky had not the heart to refuse. Indeed, as far as the foraging party were concerned, it was better to have three than two, as there was less danger of attack, and the only doubt was as to Sally's fitness to be left in charge of the house. She had, however, seen so much of the dangers of the wood, and, as we have seen, had even suffered in her own person at the hands of the enemy in such a manner, that the other pigs thought she must really have learned caution by this time.

Jerry and Becky, however, before leaving her, gave her strict but affectionate advice, reminding her how very important it was that she should keep the doors fast, admit no visitors, and have everything ready for supper by the time they returned.

Sally bridled with a mixture of real and pretended anger at its being supposed that *she* was not as well able as any of them to take care of herself and the house. She told her sister and brothers that she only hoped *they* would take care of *themselves*; for her part, she had no fears, and knew as much of the ways of the world and of the wood as some people who thought themselves so much wiser than anybody else. So they left her, and went off on their expedition.

They found the bank; they found the beech-trees;

and, joy of joys! they found the truffles. Many a London alderman and lover of good living would have liked to have been in the place of those three little pigs that day! Rich, fine, tasty truffles were there in numbers, with the earth clinging round them in their beechy beds, and the ground being enriched by their pleasant presence, was easy to be rooted up by the keen noses of the eager pigs.

Obby could not be restrained from eating more than was good for him, and was promised by Becky a good stiff dose of rhubarb and magnesia the moment he got home. However, they were all highly delighted with the success of their search, and it was rather late before, heavily laden, each with a bag of truffles, they began to wend their way homewards.

When they were only about a hundred yards from the cottage, Jerry stopped and whispered to Becky that he thought he heard voices. "Do you and Obby stay quietly here," said he, "whilst I creep forward and discover the meaning of this."

They did so; and he, silently and stealthily, crept along until he got within sight of the house. What did he see? A Fox?—yes, certainly a Fox! But what was he doing? Talking? yes, evidently holding a conversation with some one. And who was that some one? None other than the wise Sally herself! Standing upon a chair, and peeping through the bars of the window, there was the giddy little pig, engaged in an earnest and apparently pleasant conversation with the enemy of her race.

Jerry listened in breathless affright. The Fox was speaking.

"Dear little Pig, sweet Miss Piggykins," he said, "the beauty of your body is surpassed by the charms of your wit. It is long, indeed, since I have seen any one at once so lovely and so clever. Have they, then, shut you up all alone?"

"Oh no, sir," replied Sally, blushing and tittering; "I am only keeping house for a while, as I told you before, because, you know, one of the wisest of the family must always remain to look after the things at home."

"Yes, you sweet creature," rejoined the Fox; "but I am sure a little walk in the wood would do you no harm. Pray let me persuade you to take a stroll with me for half an hour."

"Oh, dear sir," simpered Sally, "how *can* you talk of such things to a young lady? I'm sure it would be very improper, and Jerry and Becky would never forgive me if I went out alone like that."

"Tender little dove!" said the Fox—(and Jerry fancied he could see his eyes glare horribly when he said the word "tender")—"how cruel they are to you! Take *me* for your friend, and do not mind those harsh, strict elder brothers and sister, who go and take their own pleasure in the woods, and leave you, the choicest of the flock, to pine miserably at home!"

"Oh, Mr. Fox!" answered Sally, "how beautifully you *do* talk! It *is* unkind and harsh of them, I dare say; but—but——;" and here she hesitated.

"What is it, my duckling—my pet?" said the wily knave.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" said Sally. "Indeed I do love to hear you talk, and should like to go with you *so* much; but you know I *dare* not do so. Jerry says that foxes eat little pigs; and one of them *did* bite off a piece of my—my—my tail; and then another came down the chimney to kill us, and was boiled; and another came up through the floor, and was chopped; and so, you see, I *know* foxes are enemies: and how *can* I go with you?"

As Sally spoke of the boiling and chopping, the Fox's face assumed a savage and fierce expression, but the crafty dodger concealed his real feelings of hatred and revenge, and, drawing from his pocket a cambric pocket-handkerchief, put it up to his eyes, and appeared to burst into a flood of tears.

"What is the matter, sir? Oh, Mr. Fox! what *have* I said?" whimpered Sally; whereupon the Fox moaned out in a plaintive voice—

"Oh, cousin Timothy!—cousin Timothy!—my poor cousin Timothy! How our thoughts and actions are always misunderstood in this world! Oh, that it should come to this! Alas! alas!" And then he addressed Sally again in these words—

"Pretty little Pig, then they have deceived *you* too! Those wicked, wicked people, who always stir up strife and excite evil passions where none should exist, have poisoned your guileless and innocent mind, and taught you to believe that we Foxes are the

natural enemies of the race of pigs. Oh, little trembler, indeed it is not so! There may have been wicked foxes and cross pigs, who have fallen out sometimes, but the natural feeling of every well-disposed fox is most friendly to the pig. I, for instance, have been brought up from childhood to love and reverence the name of pig, and pig's cheek is what I just now most earnestly desire"—and here the wily animal blew a kiss at Sally, and then went on: "In this wood, dear little Pig, all the animals are friendly, and we Foxes would have clasped you Piglings in our arms as dear friends in a moment. But your cruel elders shut the door upon us, and would not even answer when we spoke to them. What were we to do? We wished to prove our friendship, and we knew not how! Then stepped in my bold, my true-hearted, my beloved cousin Timothy." Here, again, up went the cambric pocket-handkerchief, and the sobs began anew. "Oh, Timothy! how kind and good you were, my poor lost one! He came forward, and said to the other Foxes who were talking the matter over, 'I will go to the dwelling of these Pigs. At midnight I will creep down their chimney, and, once among them, I will candidly explain how matters stand, and persuade them to be friends.' Yes, my Pigling! these were his blessed words, and this his honest intention! He went, and how was he received? We who were waiting outside heard one plunge, and one yell, and no more! We found his poor body in the wood next day, and we knew that the peace-

maker had met a sad but undeserved fate. Oh, Timothy, Timothy! and now to hear how your noble action has been misrepresented!" and the Fox wailed aloud.

"Oh, dear Mr. Fox!" wept Sally, in answer to him, "how *very* sorry I am! I am sure Becky and Jerry would be sorry too, if they knew; but how *can* one know that a person is a friend when he comes down one's chimney in the middle of the night?"

"Little Pig, beautiful little Pig!" answered the Fox. "it was not *your* fault; that charming face and soft heart could never have looked or thought unkindly. Others are to blame—not you. And poor Wily, the Fox who tried to come up through the floor, to follow cousin Timothy's good example, he, too, was misunderstood, and so chopped about the head that he lies now in the Great Earth in a state which causes the deepest alarm to his many friends. But, if others have been so cruel, you, sweet little Piggy-wiggy, can make it up by kindness. Do not turn a deaf ear to my prayers, but throw open your door, and come out into the wood, and be my little loving friend."

You may well believe that Jerry listened to this conversation in a state of the greatest alarm. He knew Sally, he thought, pretty well, and never expected much good sense or wisdom from that silly little head; yet, after the warnings she had had, and the advice and caution which he and Becky had bestowed upon her, here she was, holding converse

with their deadly enemy, and evidently listening to his horrid words with a flattered attention. Was it possible that she would carry her folly so far as to open the door at his request? If so, all would be lost. She, poor little fool, would be the first victim, and there was no knowing who might be the next, or when, if ever, they would again see the inside of their house.

The Fox, kneeling opposite the window, continued to address Sally in tender and wheedling tones, whilst she, still looking out of the window, wore a silly simper upon her face, and plainly gave her admirer no reason to despair.

"Be mine, be mine, sweet Pigling!" urged the Fox.

"Really, sir, it is so *very* sudden; what *will* my brothers and sister say? You are so *very* polite," responded Sally.

"The door, the door, my tender, loving pet!" said the Fox, in his most pressing, urgent tones.

"Dear, dear!" giggled Sally, "how earnest you gentlemen are! Pray give me a little more time to think."

"My sweet, my darling!" cried the Fox, "do not drive me mad with this cruel suspense. Come to my arms at once, loveliest of thy race! come to my home in the woods; it is near at hand: there are nuts and potatoes, the loveliest cabbages you ever saw, and, oh! hog-wash in pailfuls shall be yours—hog-wash, too, of the most luscious and savoury character!"

Sally could bear no more : his blandishments had tried her sorely ; his tale of woe at the loss of his cousin had touched her deeply ; his cabbages had tempted her ; but her greedy little soul melted entirely at the thought of the promised hog-wash.

Still giggling and simpering, she whispered, in tones so low that Jerry could hardly hear her—

“Oh, you handsome, dear duck of a Fox ! I am sure you are the very dearest and kindest animal I ever saw. I *can't* refuse you anything !” and to Jerry's utter horror and consternation he heard her slide off the chair, go to the door, and begin to undo it.

Terrible moment ! Whilst she was busy at the door, the Fox came round in front of it, leaving his post by the window, and sat down opposite, waiting until the door should open. His face was now awful for a pig to behold. A smile of cruel satisfaction sat upon his countenance ; his teeth chattered with expectant joy ; his eyes glistened with the intensity of longing for the coming feast ; his brush stood out stiff with excitement, and he crouched in readiness for a spring, which would soon convince Sally of the depth and reality of his affection. Tender, indeed, he hoped to find her, but it was his teeth, and not his heart, which he intended should benefit by the experiment.

One more moment—a moment of eager anticipation on the part of the Fox, of fearful suspense on the part of Jerry—and the door was thrown open, dis-

closing Sally blushing and smirking on the threshold. With a short bark and a snap the Fox sprang upon her in an instant; a sob—a squeal—a shriek—and Sally knew now whether or no foxes were really the natural enemies of her race.

But with the sob and shriek, mingling with their very sound, came another noise of a very different character. Close at hand, so close that Jerry himself started and almost squeaked, came the deep bay of a gallant Hound; and, leaping through the wood, crashing and bounding through brambles and brakes, his eyes starting out of his head with excitement, and his whole appearance denoting that his heart was thoroughly in the business, down upon the scene rushed the noble old Foxhound of the farm, the famous Merriman, whom the pigs all respected and loved as a dear old friend.

His loud bay of excitement and passion reached the Fox's ears whilst his prey was in his very jaws. He knew he had not a moment to lose, and, leaving Sally on the threshold, he dashed round the corner of the cottage and into the wood at the top of his speed, followed by the brave Hound so closely that they both seemed to enter the brushwood at the same instant.

All this passed so quickly before the eyes of the affrighted Jerry, that he hardly knew what had happened. The noise, however, and the well-known voice of their old friend, had roused Becky and Obby from their station, and they now came scurry-

ing in, dropping their truffles as they ran up to Jerry.

Panting with mingled feelings of rage, fright, and joy, Jerry could at first only moan out the words, "Oh, Sally, Sally!" but, recovering himself after a few moments, he, Becky, and Obby rushed into the cottage.

They raised the apparently lifeless form of their unhappy sister from the ground; and Obby burst into a loud wail of sorrow, ending in an inarticulate grunt of anguish.

Sad indeed was the condition of the wretched little pig! One ear was torn nearly off, her back was bruised and covered with dirt, whilst from a gaping wound in her neck the blood was slowly trickling down upon the floor.

"Oh, Sally! Sally!" groaned Becky, "my poor, poor little sister, shall I never hear your cheerful grunt again? Will you never more be the saucy little impudent pig whom we so often had to scold, but whom we loved all the time?" and she too burst into tears.

Jerry, however, who had still a bitter recollection of the foolish conversation in which he had heard Sally take a part, was of a sterner mood; and, moreover, he felt pretty sure that the Fox had hardly had time to destroy Sally, as the others believed.

And Jerry was right. Sally was in a dead faint, very much shocked and frightened; and the wound in her throat would have proved fatal, had the Fox had

time to maintain his grasp upon her. But the Hound had arrived in the very nick of time, and although she was squeezed, bruised, and sharply bitten in the throat, no wound was deep enough to affect her life. In a little time her eyes opened. She stared around, grunted gently, moaned a little, and presently awoke to consciousness.

What she said I hardly know ; what excuses she had to offer I cannot say. I only know that Jerry was so indignant at what had occurred, that he would allow her neither supper nor conversation ; and they were just hurrying her off to bed with a good scolding, when the brave hound Merriman walked in, tired and breathless, and sat down upon the floor of the house. He had not caught the Fox, being neither so young nor so fleet as in bygone days, but said that he had given the fellow a desperate fright, and thought it would be long ere he troubled them again. His anger at Sally's folly was so great that he could hardly restrain himself from administering a severe punishment, but good nature prevailed in the end ; and after all, as she observed, she had received a lesson which she was not likely to forget in a hurry.

Then he told the little pigs the reason of his visit. Soon after they had left the farm-yard, they had been missed, and search made for them, but without success. The hound Merriman had heard the farm-servants talking about it, and wondering where the little pigs had got to ; but he had, of course, honour-

ably kept their secret. It happened, however, that, a few days after, some neighbours passing by had come into the farm-yard and expressed a wish to buy some young pigs ; and, to the great grief of the old Sow, six of her remaining children were at once sold and carried off. She gave vent to her feelings in grunts which disturbed the whole yard, and bitterly bewailed her hastiness in banishing our four little friends from their home.

On hearing her tale of distress, the kind Hound had determined to assist her if he could, and had offered to go in search of the little pigs. He had strolled through the forest for some hours without finding or hearing anything of them, till a Squirrel, who was gaily cracking nuts over his head, surprised at seeing a Foxhound alone in the wood, asked him the reason, and on hearing it, told him that he and some of his friends had lately been engaged in paving the floor of a house in which lived four pigs answering to the description of those for whom he was looking. Thanking the Squirrel for his information, and following the directions given him, Merriman arrived at the house just at the moment when Sally had opened the door, and in time to save her from the fate which her own folly, vanity, and disobedience had so nearly brought upon her.

When the good Hound had finished his story, the pigs looked at each other in some doubt as to what they ought to do ; but Becky, who had a keen sense of duty, soon expressed her opinion that their proper

course was to return to their mother. Jerry agreed, and Obby could raise no objection ; and they therefore determined to do so.

It was too late, however, to set out that night : so they made the Foxhound as comfortable a bed as they could, and expressed their regret that they had no better supper to offer him than potatoes and truffles.

"Never mind that," said Merriman ; "I am better off than you imagine ;" and he then told them that he had been lucky enough to catch a fine hare just before he reached the cottage, and had only dropped it on hearing the voice of the Fox.

He therefore went out and brought it in ; and after they had all made a hearty supper on the different food which each liked best, and had held some pleasant conversation about happy old days, they went to bed, and slept as soundly as if there were no such things as foxes in the world.

In the morning they all jumped up ready to start on their homeward journey. Sally looked terribly foolish, and could do nothing but sob and cry ; and you may depend upon it she got plenty of scolding. A miserable creature she looked, with her torn ear and wounded throat ; but Merriman insisted upon her being well washed in the tin vessel before they set out ; and when she had been thus freshened up, they saw that she had really sustained no very serious injuries. They rambled off through the wood as happily as possible, carrying with them some of their precious

truffles for their mother, but leaving their store of nuts and potatoes for any hungry wayfarers who might next take possession of the cottage.

As they travelled, the old Hound gave them much good advice, and told them many stories of pigs he had known, some of whom had been good and obedient, and had in consequence passed cheerful and happy lives, blessed with plenty of clean straw and well-flavoured hog-wash during the whole of their existence ; some, on the contrary, having been foolish, wasteful, and disobedient, had had a miserable time of it in life, and had generally perished at an early age.

I wish all children could have as wise a friend as this Foxhound to tell them the same sort of stories, and teach them how much better it is to be gentle, unselfish, and obedient.

On they came till they left the wood, and the dear old farm-yard came once more in sight. With a bound, squeak, and jump, Jerry, Becky, and Obby darted forward; but Sally, overcome with shame and fear of what her mother might say to her, hung timidly back. But the kind Foxhound cheered her up with friendly words. He told her that she had indeed been much to blame, but that all would be forgiven and forgotten, if she would try to behave more wisely for the future. Thus encouraged, she too ran on, and in a few minutes the four little pigs were once more rolling and grunting by their mother's side in the farm-yard straw. The old Sow was

delighted to see them. She told them that, as there was now plenty of room for them, and lots of food in the yard, they should never again be banished; and she gave them advice and instruction until Obby and Sally yawned audibly, and even Jerry and Becky felt inclined to follow their example.

This was all told me by a pig with a ring in his nose, whom I met going to Ashford market. I wanted to find out what afterwards became of these four pigs.

Jerry, I found, had lived for many years at the same farm, respected and beloved by all who knew him, and had gained several prizes at a neighbouring cattle-show, at which pigs formed a part of the exhibition.

Obby fell a victim to his own greediness. His inveterate love of eating caused him to grow fat so fast, that he was one morning seized, killed, and roasted for the house; and it was reported in the farm-yard that his crackling was some of the finest and best ever eaten, and his brains by no means to be refused.

I then asked about Becky, and my friend, the ring-nosed pig, told me she was well and happy, and the mother of a large family; but before I could get the news of Sally, my friend's driver pulled hard at the string which was round his hind leg, and as pigs always go the way their drivers want them *not* to go, the ring-nosed pig's whole attention was immediately taken up with this endeavour, and nothing but

a grunt and a squeak more could I get out of him. But unless Sally mended her manners, I am sure she came to no good, for there are always foxes—or enemies of some kind or other—ready to take advantage of people who are vain and silly ; and so the best thing for us all is to take care that *we* are neither the one nor the other, but to be obedient and humble-minded when we are young, and then, like Jerry and Becky, we shall enjoy life all the more when we get older and stronger.

This is all I can tell you about the Four Pigs !

THE WAX DOLL.

THERE was once a little girl who had a beautiful large Wax Doll. Its forehead was of the most delicate white, its cheeks were tinged with the most exquisite pink, its lips were ruby as coral, and its chin was moulded in the most perfect shape imaginable. You could see at a glance that this was no common doll; and perhaps that was the reason why its little Mistress thought for a long time before she settled what to call it, and at last fixed upon the uncommon but grand names of Evelina Angelica.

Evelina became a great favourite with her Mistress, and one would have thought that her prospects of happiness were far greater than those of the ordinary race of dolls. But happiness depends a great deal, with dolls, as well as men and women and children, upon the spirit in which they go through life. One must try to be cheerful and contented, and to look on the bright side of everything, if one wants to be happy. If one's shoe does not fit, one can have it altered till it *does*; but if one's lot in life is not what one wishes, one must alter *one's-self* till one fits it, and then all will go well.

But the Wax Doll was not of a disposition to do this. Her beauty and her name made her very proud ; and she gave herself wonderful airs in the Nursery and in the Baby-house, as if no other doll was fit to clean her shoes.

After the children and maids are gone to bed, or when they are away out of doors, or gone to spend the day away from home, we all know that the dolls are not without *their* amusements. Then it is that they have it all their own way : and those who understand dolls' language, and who have chanced to watch their goings on without being seen, could tell us fine stories of their proceedings.

Now, in the Nursery of the house where Evelina's Mistress lived, there was a large Baby-house, which Thornbee, the carpenter, had made and painted, and which was very grand and complete ; and there were a great many dolls who lived in it, or in the children's cupboard near it. There were four rooms in the Baby-house : a kitchen, a drawing-room, and two bedrooms above.

Here it was that the proud Evelina queened it among the other dolls. She would hardly let any of them sit in the same room with her, and treated them like beings of an inferior order. There were several other Wax Dolls, though none nearly so big as her, and they were quite ready to admit her beauty and superior size ; but dolls, like people, prefer to be treated with civility, and Mary Jane and Amelia did not like to be called insignificant little chits, or to be

ordered about in the manner in which Evelina Angelica thought proper to do. Then there were several Wooden Dolls, of great respectability, and dressed in a quiet and becoming manner. Before these Evelina would flaunt her fine clothes in the most scornful manner. She had a very fine white muslin dress, with a bright blue sash, and a pair of red shoes which just fitted her little feet ; but that was no good reason why she should despise and insult other dolls, whether they were waxen or wooden, because they did not happen to be dressed with the same smartness. As to the more common sort of dolls, she could never be commonly civil to them, but would call them "bran-stuffed idiots" to their very faces, without the least regard for their feelings or circumstances.

I am sure you must all feel that no doll with a well-regulated mind would have behaved in this manner, and you will not be surprised when I tell you that Evelina was by no means popular among the dolls in the Nursery. However, she was such a favourite with her Mistress, to whom she never spoke rudely, or showed her bad spirit, that the other dolls dared not do anything against her ; and, indeed, I don't think many of them bore malice, for dolls are generally of a calm and placid disposition, and it takes a great deal to make them really angry.

Still, holding herself as she did so much above the others, it is not wonderful that Evelina had not many friends, and that even the other Wax Dolls preferred

to play alone, or to seek the company of the Wooden and Stuffed Dolls, rather than submit to be so trampled under foot.

Things went on in this way for some time, until an event happened for the truth of which I can vouch, because the information was given me by a party upon whom I can entirely rely, as you will readily agree when you come to the end of the story.

It was a fine afternoon in September,—so fine, that the children went out in the pony-carriage, and drove to the hills to play about on the downs and get a good breath of fresh air. There was a little wind, but very little; the sun was shining brightly, and not a cloud was to be seen in the sky; and Evelina's Mistress thought it would do some of her dolls good to get a breath of fresh air as well as herself. So she dressed Evelina in a red pelisse which Nurse had made for her, and she took two of the Wooden Dolls—I think their names were Eliza and Dorothy—for companions; and off they all drove in the pony-carriage to the hills.

When they got there, Evelina's Mistress and the other children played about, and enjoyed themselves very much; but, first of all, the dolls were carefully seated side by side in a little hollow on the hill, with their backs resting against the green grass.

Whilst the children were playing at a little distance off, Evelina said to the other dolls—

“Now, don't sit too close to me, Woodies, for you see I have got my new pelisse on, and I should not

like the passers-by to think that you and I belonged to the same party. One ought always to keep up one's dignity in this world."

The Wooden Dolls paid very little attention to what she said, but moved an inch or two further off, and talked quietly to themselves. Their talk was of the fun they had in the Nursery when the Mistress was away; what games and romps they had sometimes, in which Evelina never joined, for fear of getting her beauty spoiled; and how they would be able to teach the other dolls new games, by watching the way in which the lambs were playing on the hill.

All this time Evelina was admiring her own dress, and thinking how much prettier it was than those of the other dolls; and moreover she was thinking a great deal about a bead necklace which her mistress had been trying on her, and which she hoped would soon become part of her usual ornaments.

Meanwhile, time slipped away, and, without the children observing it, the wind gradually rose a little, and small clouds began to creep up and up from the south, till the blue sky became covered with them, and large drops of rain began to fall.

"Quick! quick!" said the Nurse; "we must go home directly, my dear children, or we shall all get wet through and through; and then what will Mamma say?"

So they left off playing, and hurried into the pony-carriage as fast as they could; and the dolls were hastily taken up by their Mistress, and bundled with

her into the carriage in a manner quite discomposing to Evelina's dignity.

But the Nurse and children were not in time to escape the shower. The drops of rain fell faster and faster, and the heavens were quite black with clouds. There was no keeping dry, do what they would! the rain found its way in everywhere; and before they drove up to the front door they were all drenched. The Nurse and the little girls were as wet as possible; and you may depend upon it the dolls came no better off, for, do what she might, their little Mistress could not keep them from the rain.

The Wooden Dolls, not having their best things on, did not so much mind it; but Evelina's pelisse was soaked entirely, and had besides a splash or two of mud upon it, which did not improve its beauty. She sat sulkily on her Mistress' lap till they got home, and then, in the hurry of taking the children out of the carriage, and hurrying them upstairs to change their wet things, she and her companions were left in the hall for a little while, all by themselves.

"Well," said one of the Wooden Dolls, "this has been quite an adventure, and not a very pleasant one either. I hope we shall none of us catch cold from this wetting."

"*You* catch cold!" said Evelina, with a sneer; "that is not very likely: and if you did, it would be no great matter, tough, common creatures as you are! But just consider *my* state—entirely drenched, and left here in such company, without even a rub with a

towel! *I* shall certainly catch cold, and, with my delicate complexion and refined habits, it is a matter of some importance."

I think the Wooden Doll would probably have replied, for she saw no reason why Evelina's cold should be so much more important than her own, but at that moment the door opened, and their little Mistress came hurrying in—

"Oh, my poor dear dolls!" she cried, "I declare I forgot that you were as wet as I was; but we'll soon set *that* right:" and opening the door of the library, where, the afternoon being chilly, the fire had been lighted, she carefully placed each of the dolls inside the fender, with their backs against it, and at the same time took off Evelina's pelisse, and hung it also on the fender to dry. Then she turned away, and was going to sit down and read a book to amuse herself, when she heard her brother's voice calling her to come and play with him; so she ran out of the library and shut the door, little thinking of what would happen.

The fire blazed bravely up, and threw out its heat over the room in a manner which was pleasant enough at first—the dolls felt their clothes getting drier and drier, and altogether more comfortable. But Evelina, being made of wax, was, in spite of her proud heart, of a melting disposition. Soon the fire became too hot for her; but she had no power to move further off, and could not avoid its heat. Hotter and hotter she grew, till at last a big drop of wax

rolled off her forehead and down her cheeks, scorching them as it passed. Oh ! if her little Mistress had but remembered and come back just then ! But it was not to be. She groaned out aloud to the Wooden Dolls that she was melting, and should certainly die. They answered that they were very sorry, but that *they* felt no inconvenience from the fire, and that she shouldn't be so thin-skinned. But when they saw how she really suffered, their wooden hearts were quite touched, though they inwardly rejoiced that they were made of something less tender than wax. Sad indeed was the sight : slowly the colour faded from Evelina's cheeks ; another drop from her forehead ; and then, horrible to relate, the tip of her nose—that nose so lately the pride and envy of the Baby-house—fell off into her lap. Even her arms suffered considerably ; but the havoc which the fire made with her face was too fearful for me to tell without a shudder. Imagine what her sufferings must have been ! And think of the shocking mortification to her conceit and vanity ! Her beauty was slowly but surely dropping from her, and the agony of her body was small compared to the tortures of her wounded spirit. At last she groaned out—

“Oh, if I was but wooden!—if I had but been stuffed with bran ! Oh dear ! oh dear ! will nobody help and pity me ?”

And the kind Wooden Dolls forgave her all her past haughtiness, and tried to comfort her with friendly words. She was, however, beyond their power to

soothe, and in fact they were themselves beginning to feel it rather too warm to be pleasant, when at last their little Mistress came rushing in.

"Oh, my dolls! my dolls!" she screamed, "what must have happened to you!—how silly I was to forget you!" and she ran quickly up to the fender, and snatched them all away in a great bustle.

Evelina could not come away without difficulty, for the back of her head, being partially melted, stuck to the fender, and so did those parts of her legs which touched it; so that her back hair was cruelly torn and hurt in taking her up, and the calves of her legs had lost all their beauty and shape. But, alas! this was not the full extent of the mischief! Where, oh where, was that beautiful face which had so often been the admiration of her Mistress and the other children? Where, indeed! Her nose was gone—positively melted off—till only a frightful blotch of wax showed you where that lovely feature had been. Her white forehead was smeared and blotted with fire-spots. Her cheeks were cheeks no longer; and the coral-red of her lips had melted off on each side of her mouth, smearing her chin and the side of her mouth with hideous marks. Was this the same Evelina who had sallied forth so proudly that morning? Her Mistress looked at her for a moment, and then fairly burst into tears. Her own doll—her favourite doll—her pet—her treasure—spoiled and ruined by her own carelessness!

However, after a very little while, she came to the

sensible conclusion that crying never does anybody any good in such cases as that of a melted doll ; and she therefore hastened up to the Nursery, and placed the three dolls among the other ones. All was of course silent and orderly, whilst the children and the maids were present ; but as soon as they were all gone to bed and to sleep, the other dolls came crowding round Evelina and her two companions to know what had happened, and how it had all come about.

Evelina hid her face—or what was left of it—for shame, whilst the other two told the whole story. Then the dolls all began to talk at once. Some were very sorry, and said so ; some said they were glad that Evelina was at last punished for her pride ; and some, whose remarks were hardest to bear, declared that they “ had always said so,” which was perfectly untrue, but which is a thing that certain dolls—and people too—always *will* say when anything happens to anybody.

Evelina bore it all as well as she could, for she was thoroughly humbled, and after a while she summoned up strength to tell the other dolls how sorry she was that, when in the pride and power of her beauty, she had not been more gentle and considerate to others.

“ I see now,” she said, “ that beauty is but skin deep, and that it is better to be a kind-hearted, well-disposed Bran-stuffed Doll, than the handsomest Wax Doll that was ever made, if one has not a good heart and right feeling.”

Then she earnestly begged pardon of the Wooden

and Bran-stuffed Dolls, whom she had often before insulted, and begged that, although she was no longer a fit object to appear in the drawing-room, they would allow her to sit in one of the bedrooms in the Baby-house, and keep out of sight as much as possible.

Upon the whole, the general feeling of the dolls was one of pity and forgiveness towards the humbled beauty, and they assured her that she might depend upon their showing her all that consideration which misfortune demands of the charitable. She thanked them in a trembling tone, and passed a sleepless night in thinking over all that had happened.

Next morning her little Mistress was early about, and after taking all her dolls down and putting the Baby-house thoroughly to rights, she carefully examined Evelina's injuries. She said very little, but presently took the doll with her to her Mamma, to whom she told the whole story, and asked whether anything could be done to ease the poor injured innocent. Her Mamma told her she had been very careless, and ought to have known better than to leave a Wax Doll before the fire, but that if she would give Evelina into her charge she would see what could be done.

I never could find out what really was done, or who was the doctor to whom the doll was sent. All I know is, that the dolls in the Nursery missed Evelina from amongst them for several weeks, and began to think she must be dead. Then they did what people always do when their friends are dead—they quite forgot all

her proud looks and haughty words, and only remembered her great beauty, and how humble and sorry she had been when trouble came upon her; and they all began to find out (what they never would have discovered otherwise) how fond they had been of her, and how much they missed her. But Evelina was not dead—not a bit of it! and one day, when the dolls were scattered about the Nursery, some on the sofa and some in the Baby-house, some half dressed and some all untidy, in came the little Mistress with something in her hand, which she carefully put down upon the sofa. Evidently it was a doll—but, What? Who? Can that be Evelina? Yes; there was no doubt about it. A new nose had been put upon her face; her cheeks had been carefully re-formed, and the same lovely colour put upon them; her lips were as red as ever, and her whole countenance beamed with joy.

There was much happiness and mirth among the dolls that night. They soon found out that although it was Evelina herself who had returned, it was not the old proud Evelina, but that she had learnt by her misfortune to be gentle, and kind, and loving to all around her. There were no more sneers and no more taunts; all the dolls in that Nursery were treated kindly and like sisters by the beautiful Wax Doll, and the consequence was, that not only were they much better off, but Evelina herself was ten times as happy as before. Every doll loved her, and she often thought to herself how thankful she ought

to be that such trouble had fallen upon her, and had been turned to such good account. And if you want to know how I heard the story, it was because the Library Poker and the Nursery Shovel came to pay the Fire Irons in my room a visit. One had seen the doll melting at the fire, and the other knew all that passed in the Nursery; and when I heard my Tongs and Hearth Brush talking to them, I listened very attentively, and that is how I came to know the whole story of Evelina and her companions.

THE PROUD CROQUET MALLET.

THE croquet-ground was in very good order, and the ladies and gentlemen had been playing all the morning. The Pink Mallet had been in very good hands, and he and his mate, the Yellow Mallet, had consequently beaten the Blue and Black players by several hoops. So when the people had all gone into luncheon, the Balls and Mallets were left lying here and there upon the ground, thinking over the exertions they had gone through, and wondering whether they should be left at peace during the afternoon.

"That wasn't a bad game," said the Yellow Ball to his Mallet.

"No," replied the latter, "and we managed well to win it."

"We!" exclaimed the Pink Mallet, haughtily. "Pray, Mr. Yellow Stick, give credit where credit is due. Had it not been for *my* play, our party would have been nowhere."

"I don't know that," rejoined the other.

"And I think," put in the Pink Ball, "that *I* may claim a share of the credit; for had I not rolled true and straight, the victory could not have been won."

"Don't talk nonsense," said the Pink Mallet, peevishly; "you went in the direction in which you were struck, which it is the business of balls to do, and if you did *not* do so, you would very soon be condemned as a bad ball, and hustled off the ground to the waste-cupboard. *That* you know perfectly well; and as to this yellow person, he is quite well aware that he is always put to play *after* me, as an inferior player, and that it is I who do the real work and deserve the credit."

"Not a bit more than I do. I deny it altogether," returned the Yellow Mallet.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the merry Black Mallet hard by. "Fall out among yourselves, gentlemen, *pray* do! Lose your temper—as I hear the ladies sometimes telling each other that *they* do at croquet. Quarrel away, my boys, and see how we shall beat you after luncheon in consequence."

But the Pink Mallet was by no means content to leave the matter where it was, being of a proud disposition, and not at all inclined to share his honours with anybody else. He appealed to the White Hoop, against which he was leaning, who meekly replied that she could not pretend to judge, and thought the whole game, as well as the dispute about it, a very great bore.

The Mallet, however, took the matter before the Peg, who allowed that he had certainly put the Yellow Ball "out," and then himself, which had finally secured the victory to his side, but declined to say how much

or how little the play of the Yellow Mallet might have assisted him in arriving at such a result. •

The Pink Mallet, however, chose to take this statement as one entirely in his own favour, abused the Yellow Mallet for attempting to claim any share in the honours of the day, and gave himself the most absurd airs all the afternoon. His conduct was really unbearable, and the more so, because he must have known all the time that much—very much—had really depended upon the hands which had guided him through the game. He forgot this, however, and was so puffed up with his own conceit, that the other Mallets and Balls were made quite uncomfortable. They spoke civilly to him, and did their best to be on friendly terms; but it is next to impossible to live pleasantly with any person who is always thinking himself too good for his company.

Nor, indeed, was the Mallet by any means happy in his own mind, for he was for ever fancying that people didn't show him respect enough, or thinking that some slight was intended of which no one was dreaming; but such pride always tortures itself. However, his punishment was not far off.

A heavy shower of rain prevented the ladies and gentlemen from playing croquet any more that day, and it happened that unfortunately the croquet things were left out in the rain. When it ceased, the sun came out very hot and warm, and there were the Mallets and Balls all drying under his rays, which is just as bad for croquet things as it is for a child to

get his socks wet and let them dry on him at the fire. The socks should be taken off, and the feet rubbed dry with a rough towel ; and so should the mallets and balls be taken out of the wet, and carefully wiped with a cloth before being put away. All the things felt very uncomfortable, and the Pink Mallet among the rest.

But the worst was yet to come. As evening came on, the gardener's boy passed by and saw the croquet things lying about the place ; and, being a mischievous dog, thought he would see if he couldn't handle a mallet as well as other people. The rough fellow took up the Pink Mallet and hit a clumsy, lumbering blow down on the nearest Ball. Alas ! already inclined to chip owing to the effects of the sun upon his wet coat, the Pink Mallet's edge came full against the Ball, and a great piece of him chipped out and fell to the ground.

The boy slunk away, for it was against all rules for him to touch the croquet things, and he feared the consequences.

But the Pink Mallet was spoiled for ever. One chip succeeded another, and even the best player could not now use him without shaking him painfully, and occasionally chipping off another bit. There was no pride left in him now, and his tears of repentance were bitter indeed, for he felt that he had deserved his punishment. The other Mallets pitied him, but could do nothing to aid his sad case ; he soon became useless as a Mallet, and the last I heard of him was

that he had been chopped down to about a foot long, and was merely used as a hammer to drive in the pegs when the ladies and gentlemen played !

So you see it is foolish to be proud, for we don't know how soon we may be humbled and brought low ; and as the Pink Mallet's merit depended not on himself, but on the hands which guided him, so anything that is good about us comes not from ourselves, but from a Higher Power, to whom alone belongs the Praise and Glory !

THE FLY'S REVENGE.

A WASP and a Bluebottle Fly were crawling on the same window. Up and down, up and down, they sought in vain for some hole through which they might creep out and fly away into the open air among the flowers; but as the window had been carefully shut by Jane the housemaid, there was no chance of their doing so. At last the Bluebottle began to buzz rather noisily, which annoying the Wasp, the latter somewhat roughly told him to be quiet.

"I shall do no such thing," replied the Fly, "for I have every bit as much right upon this window as you have, and buzzing is my principal amusement."

"May I be murdered by a hive of bees!" rejoined the Wasp, "but you are an impudent fellow. A common Fly like you, forsooth, to presume to raise your voice when a Wasp bids you be silent. Know, contemptible insect, that the yellow upon my body denotes a princely descent, and I have a right to order and command such scum of the earth as you wretched flies."

Now the Fly was bitterly offended at this speech of the Wasp; for in his own family and among flies

generally he was thought a good deal of ; and, moreover, as a Bluebottle, and not a bad specimen either, he felt that it was putting a grievous insult upon him to class him among common flies. Inasmuch, however, as the sting of the Wasp rendered it unsafe to irritate him, and he suspected that the proud insect would use it upon the least provocation, not to mention his habit of devouring enemies of the insect tribe who fell within his clutches, the Bluebottle smothered his rising indignation and left off buzzing. He brooded over his injuries, however, for some time, and at last made up his mind to have his revenge somehow or other. He therefore approached within speaking distance of a venerable Spider, who was crouched down quite in the corner of the window-pane.

"Madam," said he, in his blandest tones, "might I have a word with you for a moment?"

"Certainly, my dear," responded the crafty insect. "Pray come into my corner, and let us have it out comfortably."

"Not for Joe!" said the Bluebottle. "If it's all the same to you, we will talk, each from his own place, where we now sit."

"Very well," growled the Spider; "I see that you are 'up to snuff:' so let it be as you wish. What do you want with me?"

"Madam," said the Fly, "should you object to a Wasp's head and wings for your supper?"

"Of course not," replied the Spider; "nor to

shoulder of Bluebottle with Daddy-Longleg sauce either."

The Bluebottle trembled all over at the bare idea, but, quickly recovering himself, went on as follows:—

"I have thought it right, Madam Spider, to come here for the purpose of letting you know that I have lately heard that Wasp, whom you may see crawling upon the window-pane, make use of the most disrespectful terms in speaking of you and of your family. He said that your pretended cunning was useless, that your webs were badly and clumsily made, and that you were an ugly, ill-conditioned brute, with more legs than you knew what to do with, and not half enough body for your greedy and ungovernable appetite."

"The Wasp had better look at home, the yellow scarecrow!" remarked the Spider.

"Yes, madam," rejoined the Bluebottle, "but he said many worse things than I have now told you, accusing you of horrible murders, and speaking of you generally in such a manner as induced me, who have always had the greatest respect for you and your family, to take the step I am now doing."

"What step?" sneered the Spider. "You seem to me to be standing perfectly still, and as for your respect for me, you certainly keep at a respectful distance. Come near, my dear friend, and let us understand one another a little better."

"Madam," said the Bluebottle, drawing himself up

in a dignified manner, "I cannot so far forget what is due to you as well as to myself, as, by approaching you too closely, to expose you to the temptation of committing an act which you might hereafter regret. The step which I propose to take is this. I will not conceal from you that I, too, have cause of offence against this arrogant upstart of a Wasp. I propose now to challenge him to prove certain assertions which he has lately dared to make against me, and I will suggest that you should be the umpire."

"Stay," said the Spider, "that will never do. The Wasp will never consent, for he well knows how partial I am to flies."

"Scarcely, madam, in the sense in which you will be asked to act," responded the Fly. "My plan is that, you being chosen as umpire, we shall each stand at some little distance on either side of your web: you will then ask us questions, and I will also make remarks to the Wasp which will induce him to draw nearer and nearer towards us both. I leave the management of your web to you; but if you do not succeed in entrapping my fine gentleman securely, you are not the clever creature which I believe you to be."

"Verily, friend Bluebottle," quoth the Spider, "thy notion is good, and thy plan worthy of reward, which I will take care thou shalt receive in due time."

So saying, she bade him be off at once and endeavour to carry out the object which he had in view. Accordingly, going as near the Wasp as he dared,

the treacherous insect assumed the air of an injured person, and said with as much dignity as he could muster to his aid—

“Lord Wasp, just now you forbade me to buzz, and used very harsh language towards me. I am sure that you can hardly expect me to submit to such injury without complaint ; and although I know but too well that in this world the weak must always give way to the strong, still, as tame submission on my part to the language you have employed towards me might seriously damage my prospects in life, I hope you will not object to let an impartial person decide whether I really deserve the terms you have used. There is the Spider, for instance, who has no great friendship for me, but by whose decision I would willingly abide, if you would consent that she should judge between us.”

“Sting the Spider, and you too !” angrily replied the Wasp ; “I don’t care a gnat’s wing for either of you. But as I happen to have nothing to do this afternoon, I don’t mind hearing what the old lady can have to say upon the case.”

So the Wasp walked quietly up to the corner where the Spider lay, and the Spider came out a little way to meet him, whilst the Fly trotted out a short distance on the other side, so that the umpire was between him and the Wasp.

“Well, Mother Spider, spinning as usual ?” began the Wasp.

“Yes, my smart gentleman, always spinning ; the

web of fate, you know, the web of fate," replied the Spider, with a fearful grin.

"So I find neighbour Bluebottle has been telling you a pretty story about me," continued the Wasp.

"No story at all, you rude brute!" shouted the Fly, from the other side.

"Halloo, you impudent scamp!" retorted the Wasp, advancing a step nearer as he spoke; "you've changed your tone, then, for you were humble enough just now."

"Ah! but the Spider will see justice done," said the Bluebottle; and so thought the Spider too, and she kept on steadily spinning whilst she joined in the conversation.

"What is the matter between you two," she asked, "that you cannot live quietly without falling out?"

"Us two!" sneered the Wasp; "I hope you don't couple me with a snob like that!"

"Snob yourself, you proud thing!" shrieked the Fly; and the Wasp drew a step nearer in a passion.

"Break my wings and legs, Fly!" said he, "but you'll be in a scrape in less than no time, if you go on like this;" and then addressing the Spider, who was still spinning steadily, he said, "Do you think I'm to blame, old lady, for speaking as I please to such a common fellow as that?"

"Indeed," replied the Spider, speaking very slowly, and spinning away as hard as she could all the time, "I can hardly say; you Wasps are very gay, grand gentlemen, as we all know, and a poor Spider seldom

sees you close enough to know all your powers and privileges. What a fine yellow coat you seem to have on! Pray, is that your sting in your tail?"

"Exactly so," answered the Wasp, putting his sting in and out once or twice to let her see its strength. "Why, I could kill a Fly like that Blue-bottle there with one sting, and eat him afterwards, if I'd a mind, for my mouth is well able to bite such as him, you see;" and he opened his mouth, and looked as fierce as he could.

"I don't fear you," cried the Fly.

"Don't you, though?" said the Wasp, and moved a step nearer.

And the Spider still spun on. "Well," said she, "you are certainly a fine fellow, handsome, well-formed, and of noble birth, and armed, moreover, with formidable weapons. We poor Spiders, on the contrary, have but our webs to work with and bring food to our mouths, which are well enough able to manage it then. Now a Wasp could sting asunder such webs as ours in a moment, I dare say. Dear, dear! how strong you must be, to be sure!"

"There is little doubt of *that*," said the Wasp. "We are certainly the bravest as well as the strongest of insects, next to our cousin the Hornet, and a Spider's web would be like air for us to walk through."

"You are a boastful fool, Wasp!" here shouted the Fly; which so incensed the Wasp that he rushed forward towards him, or rather attempted to do so,

for he found himself entangled somehow, so that he could not go on as he wished.

"What is this?" he angrily exclaimed.

"Only the Spider's web, my dear!" said the Spider, with a grin fearful to behold. "Pray walk through it like air, my fine gentleman Wasp—pray do!" and she ran up a little higher into her corner, spinning at a tremendous pace, and entangling the poor Wasp more and more every moment. He bit and stung right and left, as you may well believe, but the more he struggled the more he became entangled, and it was plain enough that there was no escape for him.

"So," jeered the Spider, "I'm an 'old lady,' am I? But I've teeth enough left to crack *your* skull, at any rate! I shall soon see you close enough to know all your 'powers and privileges!' Ha! ha! I shall know all about you soon, for you are quite in my power, and when I choose I shall come and crawl upon you, and begin my pleasant feast upon you, as you lie there, tied so tight that you can't move. *You* to sneer at a Spider—you yellow beast!—Ha! ha! ha!" And the Spider laughed cruelly at the poor wretch, as he lay there groaning in mingled rage and despair, only too well knowing the sad fate which awaited him.

The Spider span on as she was talking, having always an eye to business, and the Wasp cried out in anguish—

"Oh, Spider, Spider! what have I done to you, that you should treat me thus? Is it at the request of

a common Fly that you thus entangle a person of my quality? My cousin the Hornet, if he were but here, should teach you a different story!"

"But he ain't!—but he ain't!" shrieked the Fly, in a transport of joy. "You're trapped, Wasp!—you're trapped! and will no more insult honest Bluebottles. Thank you, Mistress Spider; thank you, kind friend! He! he! he!"

"What! is that *you*, Master Fly?" quoth the Spider, steadily spinning on. "Are you satisfied at last, then?"

"Yes, indeed," replied the Fly, eagerly; "I shall never forget your kindness."

"I don't think you will, my boy," remarked the Spider, with a grim smile, which betokened mischief. "Come here to me, and give us a kiss?" and she began to approach him.

With the laugh still in his mouth, the Fly started off when he saw the Spider draw near, but, to his intense horror, surprise, and disgust, found that he too was entangled in the deadly web. He screamed aloud, and struggled; but in vain.

"Ah, traitor!" said the unhappy Wasp, "this, at least, is one drop of sugar in my bitter cup. You, too, will fall a victim to the cruel monster into whose power you have betrayed me."

"Oh! no, no! no, no!" yelled the Fly, in terrible alarm, as the Spider now drew quite close to him. "It can't be so—I know it can't. Oh, *dear* Spider! oh, *kind* Spider! oh, *Queen* of Spiders! *pray* don't

hurt me ! You never would think of hurting me, who have provided you with so good a supper ? ”

“ And breakfast, too, you silly fool ! ” replied the Spider. “ Why should you fare better than your neighbours ? You thought the Wasp was proud, because he wouldn’t have his name coupled with yours just now, but you will both soon be comfortably coupled together down *here*, ”—and she patted her stomach complacently, and almost cracked herself with laughing. “ Ha ! ha ! ha ! ” she laughed out, in the most unfeeling manner. “ Wasp’s head and wings for supper ! Bluebottle shoulder and Daddy-Longleg sauce for breakfast ! That’s prime feeding ! Why, I’ve got provisions for a week ! Hurrah ! ”—and she cackled and roared into the poor Fly’s very mouth. “ However, ” said she, “ you shall have the pleasure of seeing your enemy die first, since it was you who provided the supper. ”

So saying, she approached the unhappy Wasp, who lay there tightly bound, and crawling gently over him, so as to avoid the chance of touching his sting, commenced her meal upon the back of his head with the greatest calmness. “ Don’t bite me with that fine mouth of yours now, ” said she, with a savage chuckle ; but the poor Wasp could of course make no reply, and in a few seconds he had ceased to live.

Worse, if possible, was the fate of the Fly. Satisfied with her meal, the Spider retired to sleep, first taking care to bind him securely, that he might not give her the slip before morning. He remained in

pain and dread all the night, bewailing his own treacherous conduct, which had brought him into this sad condition. Early in the morning he was awakened by the cruel Spider, who, eating off his wings and legs, left him to expire in sad and lingering agony, and made a second meal upon his carcase at luncheon-time.

So ended the life of the wretched Bluebottle ; and although, not being wasps or flies, it is unlikely that we shall, any of us, ever be betrayed by a fly or devoured by a spider, yet it will be well for us to remember two things—first, that pride like that of the Wasp very often meets with a sad fall ; and secondly, that if, like the Bluebottle Fly, we give way to angry passions, and seek to revenge ourselves upon others for fancied insults, our own weapons are often turned against ourselves, and we suffer from the very same instruments by which we have sought to injure our neighbours.

THE ROOK-KING.

ONCE upon a time there was a Rook, who came of an old family, and would, in any case, have been much respected among birds who have so much regard as rooks have for blood and birth. Besides this, however, he had the good fortune to be born with two white feathers in his tail, and everybody knows that a rook with white feathers in his tail is considered to belong to the Royal family. So, as this was the only rook with white feathers (although it was a large rookery in which he lived), he claimed his right to be King, and was accordingly crowned as such. He was not a harsh or bad King ; he only required the choice of a roosting-place for himself, and the right to decide the question as to which rooks should build their nests in certain favourite trees, about which there were sometimes disputes ; and he made his subjects pay no heavy taxes, only he had a claim upon them to bring him food if he felt disinclined to fetch it for himself, and to give him immediate information if a field was discovered with particularly fat worms, or better grubs than usual.

But as nobody can expect to be perfectly happy in this world, or to go through it without trouble, the Rook-King was not to be left at peace. He had his enemies in the rookery, and the chief among these were Seven Old Rooks, supposed to be very cunning and wise, who looked upon the King with envy and jealous hatred. Forgetful of the old traditions of their race, which rooks are as much bound to love and cherish as human beings, they were so wicked and so bold as to think that a rook with white feathers in his tail was no better than a common rook. "We," they said, "are as good every bit as this proud bird; we, too, have beaks, wings, legs, plumage, and are able to fly as well as he. Some of us can even fly farther, and are stronger birds. Why, then, should the accident of a white feather make this fellow the master and us the servants?"

Now this, you know, was very wrong on the part of these Seven Rooks, because their fathers before them, and their grandfathers, and all rooks for a long time back, had believed that a tail with a white feather was a mark of Royal blood, and they ought to have believed what their fathers and grandfathers had believed without further inquiry. However, they not only had these ideas in their own heads, but they taught other rooks to think the same, so that there grew up to be quite a Party in the rookery opposed to the poor King. Still, his friends were so many, and rooks are so naturally inclined to obey the powers that be, that it was not very easy to take open steps against him, or to

excite a rebellion in the rookery. Under these circumstances, the Seven Wise Rooks determined to take counsel with that celebrated old slyboots, the Magpie.

The Magpie did not live far off, and though his reputation for honesty was not very good, still he was so well known to be a cute and cunning fellow, that birds often resorted to him for advice when they were in doubt or difficulty.

So the Seven Rooks went to the Magpie, and they said to him, "We are come, Magpie, to ask your opinion as to what we ought to do to get rid of the tyrant King who reigns over our rookery ;" and then they stated the whole of their case to the Magpie, who all the time they were speaking looked so dreadfully wise that they felt themselves in the presence of a superior being. He put his head first on one side and then on the other, and his eye twinkled roguishly, while he listened to their story.

When they had quite finished, he raised himself up on his tiptoes, shook himself heartily, and exclaimed, in a gruff but jocular voice, "Chuck, chuck ! Cherokee, cherokee ! I'll do it ! I'll do it ! White feather out of tail ! Chuck, chuck !" and then proceeded to inform the seven traitors what they were to do. He gave them a white powder, which he told them they must carefully shake over some choice grubs, which they must present to the King at supper-time. Then they were to smuggle him (the Magpie) into the rookery, show him the King's roosting-tree, and leave the rest to him. In payment for this they promised him some

early eggs, and also any information they might be able to give as to where young and tender chickens were to be found.

Accordingly, that very same evening, two of these rooks presented themselves before the King with a small dish of delicious-looking grubs, which they respectfully offered to his Majesty with profound bows. The unsuspecting King, who was accustomed to such offerings, and was very partial to grubs, received the present with great condescension, and devoured it with relish.

Not long after, an unconquerable drowsiness came over him; he put his head under his wing, and fell into a deep sleep. Whilst he slept, the Magpie, who had been secretly introduced into the rookery concealed in a rook's skin, hopped up on a bough immediately below the King, and, with a skill which showed him to be no novice in the art, plucked out the two white feathers with his beak so cleverly that the sleeper only felt a little twinge, and never awoke till hours afterwards. Then, indeed, he became conscious of his loss only too soon.

The Magpie, after informing the Seven Wise Rooks of his success, had slipped quietly out of the rookery, buried the feathers, and gone home. The traitors, however, were early at their posts, and hardly had the King awoke when they commenced a loud and angry cawing, which speedily attracted the attention of the whole rookery.

"Look here! look here!" said they, "this Rook with

his white feathers is only an impostor ! They were painted feathers ; he has deceived us ; down with him,—down with him !”

The poor King tried to say a word in his own defence, but he was cawed down directly. Some highly respectable rooks, who had known him from a fledgeling, wished to interfere, but the seven traitors and their party were too strong. And, indeed, what could be done ? There was the Rook, and there was his tail, and there were no white feathers in it ! So the crowd of common rooks, judging by appearances, which were sadly against him, sided with the seven, and they fell upon the unhappy King and pecked him, and beat him with their wings, and drove him out of the rookery more dead than alive. Then there was a great confusion in the rookery all day ; but the Seven Wise Rooks were at last appointed rulers of the place until some final plan could be hit on for choosing a new king.

Now the poor King, whatever were his faults, was no fool ; he knew at once that some treachery had been employed against him, though what it was he could not quite make out, and he determined not to consent to his banishment without a struggle. So he flew as well as he could with his wounds and bruises to a neighbouring wood, wherein there dwelt an Owl, well known all over the country for her wisdom, and also for her skill in medicine.

This Owl lived in a large hollow tree, and many birds were afraid to go near her home, as there was

something solemn and mysterious in the look of the place. When the Rook approached it, all was very still and peaceful ; you could only hear the song of the wood-birds in the distance, and the tap of the Green Woodpecker, who, being a daring bird, feared nothing, and tapped freely everywhere.

The old oak was covered with thick ivy-plants, which turned and twisted round it in the most graceful manner ; and there was mistletoe, too, on that oak, which would have gladdened the children's hearts if they could have found it at Christmas. Very large was the oak, and only partly hollow ; but there was plenty of room in it for the good old Owl, and there she passed her peaceful, happy life.

The Rook-King trembled as he came up to the tree, but his case was desperate, so he plucked up courage, and hopping up to the very foot of the oak, prepared to accost the Owl. He knew, from information given him by an old Raven who had acted as his tutor many years before, and who had made the habits of owls his study, that these birds, especially the more learned and famous of them, like to be addressed with due respect and solemnity, and, if possible, in verse rather than prose. He therefore paused at the foot of the tree, and, in a melancholy caw, chanted the following words :—

“ I, poor Rook-King, by traitors just deposed,
Doubt whether I had better die, or live.
Let not thine heart, kind Owl, to me be closed,
But succour to a banished monarch give.”

He stopped, full of anxiety as to the result, when, to his great joy, he heard first a low rustling in the tree, and then "To-whoo—to-whoo—to-whoo," three times repeated, which everybody of any education knows to be the most favourable sign of approval which an owl can give. And immediately afterwards four large Bats came down, and, bowing to the King, lifted him up and placed him at the foot of the Owl inside the hollow tree. She asked him for the whole of his story, which he at once told her without any concealment, after which she pondered gravely for a few moments, and then, from a small cupboard in one corner of the hollow recess in which she was seated, she produced a bottle, and having whispered to a Bat, the latter flew out, and in a few moments returned with two Woodpigeon's feathers, which he presented to the Owl.

The Rook-King remained perfectly silent all this time, till at length the Owl said, "If you have told me a true story, your subjects will be glad to see you again and own you for their white-feathered King. If you have lost your white feathers by accident, such an accident is not likely to happen again, and the plan I now follow will make you safe enough ; but keep awake at nights and watch carefully those who are about you, for if you have enemies, and it is *not* an accident which has deprived you of your white feathers, you will not be safe, for a week at least, from losing these also."

Then the Owl placed the Woodpigeon's feathers in

the King's tail, and stuck them in it by means of the stuff she took out of the bottle; and after giving him some more good advice, sent him away.

Now the King was in such a hurry to get back again to his kingdom, that he never thought of waiting for a week, or even a day, that his white feathers might be safe, but hurried to the rookery as quickly as he could. As soon as he entered it, some friendly rooks saw him, and exclaimed at once, "Why, here is the King, white feathers and all! What nonsense have they been talking about him!"

And the news soon spread, and the rooks gathered round, and there were loud caws in favour of the King. By and by the seven traitors heard of it, and flew down to see what was the matter. When they saw that it was indeed the case that the King had come back with white feathers in his tail, they were sorely troubled, but, being wise birds, they determined to make the best of it, and not to oppose the King, as the feeling of the rooks was evidently much in his favour. So they joined loudly in the general caw of joy, and they said, "We were deceived; there was some magic which prevented us seeing the white feathers in the King's tail this morning. Hurrah for the King!"

So the King got quietly back, and as he had been so lucky, he thought it best not to punish anybody for what had happened in the morning, but to pretend it had been all a mistake.

But as soon as the next day came, the Seven

Wise Rooks hurried off to the Magpie in a perfect fury. "Oh, you infamous Magpie," they said, "you have deceived us, you have sold us! You can only have painted the King's feathers black, and he has washed the paint off. Oh, you rascal! What can you possibly say in your defence?"

The Magpie listened very quietly to their passionate cawing, and then, hopping coolly down to the bottom of his tree, pecked up the earth a little, and produced the two white feathers which he had truly pulled out of the Rook-King's tail. "Chuck, chuck, cherokee! Chuck, chuck, cherokee!" said he; "here are the King's feathers, safe enough: it is he who must have painted the tail! Let us try again."

So the Seven Rooks were much rejoiced when they heard this, and they took another powder from the Magpie, and agreed to do as they had done before. Now these rooks had often brought presents to the King before, and he had no reason for refusing them, besides which, being tired and bruised, he could not very well fetch his food for himself that evening; and so it happened that again he ate the powdered grubs with a good appetite, and again he fell into a deep sleep.

The Magpie was soon at work again, and because the Owl's adhesive mixture had not had time to dry, the Woodpigeon's feathers came out quite easily, and the poor King had once more no white feathers in his tail. When morning came, the seven traitors and their friends again raised a loud outcry. "This fellow has only white feathers in the evening,

and none in the morning," said they ; and, when the other birds gathered round to look again, there was nothing to be seen on the King but black feathers ; and again he was beaten and bullied, and hustled out of the rookery in great disgrace. Broken-hearted and despairing, he again sought the old oak-tree, and hopped up with the following verse :—

" I sought thine aid, dear Owl, for thou art wise ;
But ah ! on mine own skill too much I reckoned.
My humble pleading pri'thee don't despise,
I've lost *one* chance, but give me now a second ! "

Scarcely had he spoken when the voice of the Owl again sounded the favourable signal : again the Bats descended, and the King was placed at the feet of the Wise Bird. She heard his story to the end, and shook her head gravely at his want of caution. She then produced a bottle of milk-white fluid, with which she carefully painted two of his feathers. She then told him to go to roost in a tree hard by, and come to her next morning ; this he did, and behold, his two feathers were beautifully white ! He thanked his benefactors most heartily, and went off as fast as he could to the rookery. He arrived in the afternoon, before the rooks who had gone out for the day had returned. He had thus an opportunity of showing himself privately to several friends, and when the homeward flight came in, the rooks found their King surrounded by friends and again asserting his rights.

The Seven Wise Rooks were much annoyed, but still they had confidence in the Magpie, and at the first

opportunity they flew off to him for advice. The Magpie listened gravely, and took several minutes to think, after which he proposed a plan which delighted the hearts of the traitors. He advised that the Seven Rooks should call a general assembly of their brethren, and submit to them, that as there had been all this unpleasantness about the King of late, a great inspection of tails should forthwith be held in the rookery; that a jury of rooks should be appointed to inspect, and, if necessary, to wash all tails which appeared in an unsatisfactory condition; and that thus the right or wrong of the matter should be determined once for all. To this the Seven cheerfully agreed, and the very next morning they broached the subject.

The poor King was at his wits' end; he did not know how the colour of his tail would stand the test of soap and water, which, as all the world knows, is commonly used by rooks for washing their tails; and, moreover, he felt by no means sure of fair play. Seeing, however, that it was the Seven Wise Rooks who made the proposal, and having, moreover, ascertained that it was in their hands that the government of his kingdom had been placed during his absence, his suspicions were now fixed upon these birds as the authors of his previous misfortunes, and he determined to keep his eye upon them in future. His suspicions became certainty when he observed the busy manner with which they occupied themselves in the preparations for the tail-washing; and when, after scrubbing a few rooks whose tails were totally

innocent of white, they approached him with a vast pretence of humility and respect, he felt that at last he knew his enemies. It was, however, too late to guard against them. By the well-known code of laws long established in rookdom, Kings and Commons alike were obliged to submit to a tail-washing agreed to at a general assembly, and there was no help for it. The colour of the good old Owl stood the test at first ; but, to make assurance doubly sure, the crafty Magpie had supplied his friends with a powerful acid, which they slyly applied to the King's tail, and which in a few moments had the effect of removing every speck of white from his glossy black feathers. Then arose a fearful clamour, the seven traitors loudly proclaiming the King an impostor, the King appealing to his tried friends to support him, and everybody cawing, first one thing and then another.

The lawyers, of whom there were many, put forth different opinions ; there being some who held, that unless it could be shown that the King had painted the tail himself with intent to deceive the rookery, he was not liable to punishment, and a painted white feather in a tail, if done in infancy and with no fraudulent intent, might still constitute a claim to royalty. These, however, were overruled, and after the hubbub and riot had continued some time, the Seven birds were able once more to hustle the unfortunate King out of the rookery in disgrace and ruin.

But the brave spirit of the Royal Bird would not even now give way. Confident in the justice of his

cause, he again sought the wood in which resided his venerable friend, and, when he had reached the old tree again, he hopped up slowly, with the following mournful strain :—

“ Here comes again a most unhappy bird,
Twice made a King, and twice again un-made ;
Two remedies have failed—he seeks a third ;
Let him not seek in vain, dear Owl, thine aid.”

And once more came the rustle in the tree, and the same kind voice once more gave forth the pleasing sounds, “ To-whoo, to-whoo, to-whoo ;” and Bats again descended, and again the Royal Bird sat at the feet of the great and skilful Owl.

Sad, indeed, was his condition ; his head was pecked, his feathers were draggled with dirt, the cruel scrubbing of his relentless foes had denuded him of half his tail-feathers, and he looked like a half-starved bird that had been caught in a trap and left unfed and uncared for, for days together. And the Owl looked steadily at him, and blinked three times before she spoke ; then she shook her head gravely three times more, and ordered him a warm bath and the leg of a roasted mouse directly. Determined to obey, he bore the one and swallowed the other without a murmur, though, not being used to mouse, it made him feel exceedingly uncomfortable for some time afterwards. Then the Owl told him that his case was serious, but that if he would only attend to her, and do exactly what he was bid, there was good hope that all might yet end well.

"You must," said she, "stay with me for a fortnight, and forget rookdom for that time."

The King hesitated; but when he reflected how badly rookdom had treated him of late, he thought he might as well forget it for a time if he could. The Owl then directed four Bats to hold him tight, and, taking a pot of ointment from her old cupboard, began to rub it in where the tail-feathers had been pulled out. The King found this so exceedingly disagreeable that he cawed considerably, and even tried to peck one of the Bats; but being reminded of his promise to obey, he bore it as well as he could, and, on being released, was placed upon a cushion of soft wool and treated with every kindness. This rubbing was repeated once a day for the next three days, and at the end of that time little feathers began to show themselves.

Still the Rook was kept in the hollow tree, and only allowed to hop about on its branches; till at the end of the week there was an unmistakeable crop of new feathers, and, best of all, a decided appearance of white upon no less than three of them. Encouraged by this, and full of hope, the King was most careful to obey the Owl in everything, and day by day he found his tail growing longer and stronger.

At last the fortnight came to an end, and you may fancy the joy and delight of the Royal Bird when, being taken to a mirror, and a small hand looking-glass given him, so that he might inspect his tail more closely, he perceived a large and undeniable

white feather therein, with a lesser but equally strong and milky-white feather on either side of it.

"There!" exclaimed the Owl, "they may wash and scrub as long as they like now; but if you only steer clear of traitors, and have no unfair tail-pulling, you may go down to your grave as the White-feathered King of the Rooks."

The King thanked her from the bottom of his heart, and, vowing eternal gratitude, set off for the rookery. As soon as he appeared there, the rooks gathered round him in astonishment. He, proudly pointing to his tail, declared that he had been the victim of treachery and deceit, but that he was there to claim his rights again, and in the first place demanded that his tail should be immediately washed by three trusty and honourable rooks. This having been done, the whole community of the rooks declared that, whatever might have been the case before, he was clearly the white-feathered rook who had a right to be their King, and more especially so since the under part of several other of his tail-feathers was discovered to be of a light and delicate plum colour. He was therefore at once declared King, and great rejoicings occupied the rest of the day.

The seven traitors, however, were very angry; they did not know how to oppose what was going on, but they knew that they had some friends left, and that if they could but succeed in overthrowing the King once again, all might be well with them. As they had gone so far now, they quite resolved that

death and not banishment should be the King's lot if he were once again in their power, and with this determination they hurried off to their friend and adviser, the Magpie. They told him their story, and placed their case at once in his hands. The Magpie thought for some little while, and then burst forth with his old cry, "Chuck, chuck! Cherokee, cherokee! Chuck, chuck!" and shook himself several times and winked desperately before he said anything. At last he told them that the only thing to be done was to try the old dodge,—give the King some sleeping powder, and then see whether his tail-feathers were any stronger than before. He gave the Seven Wise Rooks some of the same powder, and promised 'to meet them again just before roosting-time, in order that they might smuggle him into the rookery as on the other occasions.

The King, however, had been taught caution by sad experience, and had taken measures to prevent being again deceived. Concealing his plan from the seven suspected traitors, he appointed a body-guard of twenty of his most faithful rooks, who should sit in his roosting-tree, relieving each other, ten at a time, through the night, so that there would always be ten awake and watching. No other bird was to be admitted into the King's tree, on any pretence whatever. When supper-time came, many birds brought their offerings to the restored King, who received them all gracefully, but took especial care not to eat the grubs which were brought him by the Seven

Wise Rooks, though he accepted their gifts with much apparent civility.

Feeling sure, however, that the King would be certain to devour their gifts before long, especially as they had taken pains to select the most delicious grubs possible, the Seven met the Magpie according to agreement, put on him an old rook's skin, and introduced him into the rookery. But about two hours after rookdom had sunk to sleep, there arose a fearful outcry, which caused every feather in the rookery to quiver with terror.

When he thought that all was safe, the wily Magpie crept up in the still silence of the night, and quietly mounted into the King's tree. He hopped gently up, twig by twig, till he was near the King, when, to his great surprise and fright, a peculiarly large rook hopped off from a neighbouring twig, and, laying his claw somewhat harshly upon his shoulder, asked him what business he had in the King's tree?

Quite taken by surprise, the Magpie began to stammer out an excuse as best he could, but the guardian rook was not to be deceived. With a loud caw of "Treason," he summoned the other nine guards, and up they all flew, whilst the King, awakened by the noise, inquired the reason of it, and ordered the stranger to be brought before him. Chattering with terror, the natural voice of the Magpie soon showed him to be no rook, and in his efforts to slip quietly away, his rook-skin became disarranged, and was in a few moments torn from his

back by the indignant birds. No time was given him for defence. No trial was possible. Aroused by the outcry, rooks hurried in from every quarter, and, rendered all the more savage by being aroused from their sleep, they fell with such fury upon the Magpie, that, in spite of his cries and screams and vows of vengeance, he was literally pecked to death before he could get out of the rookery; his body was thrown ignominiously on the ground; and his well-deserved end was a subject of rejoicing to the mind of every well-regulated rook.

It is well known that the fate of this bird, which was told with much exaggeration throughout the whole of the magpie world, is the cause of magpies for ever after endeavouring to find a thick thorn-tree in which to build their nests; thus, they think, they will be protected from the united attack of any number of rooks or other birds, and more easily slip away if such an event should occur. Failing this, they build in the most secluded spots, and carefully avoid making their nests anywhere near a rookery.

But the affair did not end with the death of the Magpie. Early the next morning, the King summoned a general meeting, and denounced the Seven Wise Rooks as the authors of all the evil which had befallen him, and the disturbance which had agitated the rookery. Convicted by the words of the dying Magpie (of which there were many witnesses), by the proofs given by the King, and by the poisoned grubs—of which a careful analysis was made by three of the

chief rook doctors, who all said entirely different things, but all agreed that the grubs had been doctored in some way or another—the unhappy traitors could make no defence. They endeavoured, in their wild despair, to maintain their impious doctrine that white tail-feathers did not prove Royal blood or give any superiority to their owner. However, no right-minded rook could, of course, listen to this for a moment; and having been hustled, pecked, stripped of their tail-feathers, and made to undergo every insult and indignity which is most hateful to a rook, they were conveyed into a neighbouring ploughed field, and delivered to a rook-boy, who, after wringing their necks with much gratification, hung them as scarecrows on different sticks round the field, while the whole community of rooks, eddying round in circles far above their degraded heads, cawed out loudly their delight at witnessing the miserable end of these wretched traitors.

The King, profiting by the severe lesson which he had received, took good care to reign for the future in such a manner as to win the love of all his subjects, and was never afterwards disturbed in his kingdom. From time to time, too, he visited the old wood, and paid his respects to his true friend the Owl; and from her he received many maxims of good government, and much wise advice, by which he regulated his conduct.

The Owl, indeed, lived on—and I hope still lives—the kind instructress of all who consult her. True

it is that the Magpies have never forgotten the part she took in frustrating the schemes of the crafty adviser of the Seven traitor Rooks; and hence it is that, since the day of his death, no owl can venture forth in the daytime without the magpies, if any be near, and their natural allies the jays, bursting into discordant cries and hoarse shrieks, by which they hope to annoy the venerable bird. True it is, also, that the common herd of blackbirds, and the smaller fry, are but too ready to follow so discreditable an example, and join in the outcry against the wise and pious Owl.

But among birds, as among men, he who goes on his own way quietly and steadily, honestly endeavouring to do what is right, and full of love and friendship for his fellows, need not fear the voice or the pen of those who strive to annoy and injure him. So, in spite of magpies, jays, and all the ignorant rabble which follow them, the Owl keeps on her own wise course, and lives happy and contented in the midst of this troublesome world. And rooks, who are honest and straightforward birds, never join in the folly of the more frivolous birds, and their clamour against the Owl, but respect her virtuous character, and ever bear in mind her kind advice and assistance to their Royal sufferer, and the consequent benefits which were shed over the whole community of rookdom.

Let us hope that if any of us should be ever in trouble, we may find such a friend in need as the Owl proved to the White-feathered King of the Rooks!

THE FOX STORY.

THERE was a great stir among the foxes in the large earths at Parracre Wood. News had gone abroad that old Father Reynard was near his end, and his sons, grandsons, cousins, and other relations came in from all parts of the country round to pay him respect, and to show their affection to their venerable chief. Never had so many foxes crowded together in the great cave which the labour of their ancestors had scooped out in the sandy bank of Parracre, and which was reached by various long passages from the outer world. There it was that Reynard was laid in his last illness, and there it was that the foxes came trooping in, full of sorrow at the loss which their whole race would sustain by his death.

There was many a fox there well known to fame in the sporting newspapers of Foxdom. Game-botherer, the terror of his neighbourhood; Pheasant's-foe and Rabbit's-fright, the twin brethren of The Covert; Baffle-hounds, the celebrated fox of Ashley Wood; Dodger and Doubler, from the Blean Woods; Long-brush, of Cheriton Wood; False-scent, of Trinley Park; Hare-scarer, from the open country; Goose-

slayer, from Brabourne Coombe; and that famous fox, Keeper's-dread, who had kept the whole Evington country so long in awe by his daring depredations. These, and many others, gathered round Reynard in the Parracre Earths, as he lay upon a couch of chicken feathers, with a soft rabbit-skin pillow under his ancient head, which was crowned with a lamb's-skin night-cap, and his feet kept warm inside a newly-slaughtered hare, whose head he gently nibbled from time to time as a necessary stimulant.

Looking upon the members of his family with an affectionate but melancholy expression upon his venerable face, Reynard bid them welcome to his abode, though, as he said, it was the last time he could hope to do so. "My children," said he, "I have sent for you, as has long been the custom in our family at such seasons, because my time on earth is drawing very short. My Will will be hereafter duly read, and you will find that I have dealt justly by you all. I cannot leave the world, however, without doing that which may be of more service to you than any of the worldly goods which you will inherit when I am gone. I will give you the history of my life,—its joys and woes, its dangers and its escapes, its successes and its failures, its snares and troubles, its wisdom and its folly—all will I place before you, so that you may know how much there is in the world to guard against and to avoid, as well as to enjoy, and that you may profit by the experience of your aged relative."



The Sick Fox.



The Foxes, upon this announcement, gave vent to their feelings in a low and respectful murmur of satisfaction. They knew that Reynard's life had been long and eventful; they had heard strange stories of his early youth; and they looked forward with intense interest to the recital of his history.

Having arranged himself comfortably upon his couch, eaten a lozenge of preserved hare's brain, and ordered the younger Foxes to abstain from smoking, lest his voice should be made hoarse by the fumes of their cigars, the old Fox cleared his throat, and began the promised story of his life.

Never had fox or man a more interested and attentive audience, for none of the race had ever been more respected and beloved than Reynard; and although those around him had known but little of the world outside their own county, it was generally believed that he, their sire and chief, had been a great traveller, and had gathered much of the cunning for which he was so famous during his sojourn in foreign lands. They listened, therefore, in the hope of receiving hints which might be invaluable to them in their future lives, and not an ear but was pricked up with attentive anxiety as Reynard began his tale.

"I was born," said he, "of respectable parents in the Vine Country, and passed the earlier months of my existence in innocent gambols around the Earth of my ancestors. It was not long, however, before I was informed by my mother, that, as the number of foxes in the wood was considerable, and food scarce,

my sister and I must betake ourselves to another part of the world. I think I see now the commencement of our journey! My sister hung weeping upon our mother's neck, whilst I, with tears in my eyes, strove to maintain a more brave and fox-like bearing. The parting gave some pain to our mother, who really loved us, and she plucked a few white hairs from my sister's brush—which was beautifully tipped with white—which she said she should always keep in remembrance of us. We never saw her or our father again, but the constant and careful manner in which that country was hunted by our cruel foes the Hounds leaves but little doubt of their fate.

“Dear sister! How I loved her, and what companions we were! Well do I remember our first meal after leaving our home. We saw some rabbits feeding outside the wood, and my sister hid in the ditch between them and their holes, whilst I went round into the field and made a dash at them. They scampered in every direction, but many ran home at once, and great was their horror when my lovely sister rose suddenly from the ditch and seized one of their number before he could reach his place of safety. A fine, fat rabbit, I recollect, he was; and we, not a little proud of the success of our trick, sat down then and there, and made a hearty supper, after which we travelled to a neighbouring plantation, and slept there amid the brambles and thick underwood.

“We stayed there all the next day, and towards night sallied forth again on our journey, and came

to a field in which were many sheep and lambs feeding.

"This field was close to a wood, along the edge of which we crept. Leaving my sister to await my return, I stole up to the place where some of the lambs were playing near to the hedge, and seeing a small one which I could manage nicely, I sprang out suddenly and seized master lambkin in my loving arms. He gave forth a piteous bleat, but was soon silenced. The flock ran together in great alarm, but neither shepherd nor dog appeared to be upon the spot; so I dragged the lamb into the wood as quickly as I could, and my sister and I heartily enjoyed our supper.

"For the next few days no adventure occurred to us which would be worth the telling, but there was one about to happen which nearly finished my adventures altogether.

"We had been staying in a small wood for some little time, living principally upon rabbits, when, desirous of a change of food, we determined to attack the poultry of a neighbouring farm. Accordingly, when night came on, we stealthily crept out, got under the gate of the farm-yard, and looked about everywhere for food. All seemed quiet: there were no dogs about and no appearance of danger, and in a corner of the yard we saw a small, low lodge, which we were very sure was the poultry-house. Going up close to it, what was our delight to find that the hole through which the poultry passed to enter the house

was not only large enough to admit a moderate-sized fox, but, by some unaccountable carelessness, had been left open! I peeped in, and saw a number of splendid fowls peacefully at roost. My mouth watered at the sight, and I told my sister that I would enter first, and could then hand her out the spoil while she kept watch outside. To this she agreed, and I began to creep through the hole. But I had miscalculated both its size and my own. When I was half-way through, I found that I could scarcely accomplish the task I had set myself, and, indeed, for a moment I stuck fast. A vigorous struggle, however, enabled me to get through, but in the struggle the shaking of the door loosened the heavy piece of wood which ought to have been slid down to secure the passage and to keep the fowls safe, and it now fell of itself in such a manner as not only to prevent my return by the way by which I had come, but, by catching the end of my brush, to hold me fast, a prisoner without hope of escape.

“The noise, and the shriek of surprise to which I could not avoid giving utterance, awoke the fowls, who, on seeing me, began to make the most abominable row that ever distracted the ears of mortal fox. I called out to my sister to help me, but she, poor thing, could do nothing.

“‘Oh, brother, brother,’ she cried, ‘what *has* happened—what *will* happen to you?’ And she ran to and fro in front of my prison in great anguish of mind, until, hearing some men hurrying to the scene

of action, she wisely rushed off as fast as she could. Presently, up came two men, talking to each other.

“‘Why,’ said one, ‘whatever is the meaning of all this here row?’

“‘Look! Jem,’ cried the other, suddenly. ‘My eye! here’s a go! There’s a Fox caught by his brush in the hole of the hen-house!’

“And both the brutes burst out into a hearty laugh at my misfortune.

“‘Well,’ said the first speaker, ‘here *is* a pretty good business. Blest if our old hen-house ain’t a precious sight better policeman than those uniformed chaps that walk about and never catch nobody! *This* here thief’s caught, and no mistake! What shall we do with him?’

“‘Here comes master,’ replied the other; and as a third man came up, he asked him, ‘Here’s a Fox, sir, caught by the brush in the hen-house. Shall we kill him?’

“My blood ran cold; but a voice replied: ‘What! kill a Fox, you fool! We should never hear the end of it if we did. What would Squire Jones, and Dickins, and all the gents say if we went and killed a chap like this? No, no! Go you, Jem, and get a sack, and we’ll pop him in, and take him over to the kennels to-morrow, and then, if they want to turn him down and hunt him, they can do it.’

“Off went Jem to get the sack, and I was left, still held fast by the brush. The only satisfaction which I had was one which few foxes would have had the

nerve to take. In the midst of my anxiety, the fluttering, foolish fowls kept rushing about, screaming in the most absurd manner, and an old white hen came somehow just within my reach, when I seized and slaughtered her, being determined that one other victim should perish as well as I, and thus, if I was to die, it would not be without this vengeance at least.

“Presently I heard the man return with the sack; the door was gently unlocked, and whilst one fellow held the sack open, the other seized me by the brush with the intention of popping me in. Stupid idiots! they knew little of fox-craft. In a moment I snapt boldly at the calf of his leg with such good-will that he let go my brush and bellowed like a bull. I lost not a moment, but bolted like a shot, right between the legs of the fat farmer who stood looking on.

“How it was managed I don't know to this day, but somehow or other my sudden rush sent him off his balance, and, tripping up, he came plump down into the mud; and whilst he was roaring with rage, the bitten man with pain, and the other with laughter at his master's absurd appearance, I jumped the farm-yard gate and ran to the wood at the top of my speed. I was quite out of breath when I got there, and too tired to go any further. Having, therefore, made my supper off a rat, which I caught in the ditch which ran round the wood, I rested all night and the next day, and then resolved to search for my sister, whom I thought likely to be near. I did not find her, however, and had re-entered the wood towards night,

when I saw a hare coming along, apparently tired and frightened. I lay still behind a thick bush till she was close to me, and then suddenly sprang out and seized her.

“‘Oh, Mr. Fox—Mr. Fox,’ she cried, in a plaintive tone, ‘spare me! Spare me, I implore you, by all you hold dear! I have only just escaped from one of your race, and now I fall into *your* hands!’

“‘Well,’ said I, ‘I do not often spare hares when I am hungry; but if you can tell me some news I want to hear, perhaps you may receive mercy. What kind of a fox was that from which you have so lately escaped, and where was it?’

“‘Kind Mr. Fox,’ replied Puss, in trembling accents, ‘it was in that thick plantation yonder, two fields off, when, as I was crouching in my form, a fox, with a very white tip to her tail, sprang at me so fiercely that she jumped right over me, and I slipped away before she could recover herself. It was not a quarter of an hour ago; so, if this was the news you wanted, pray, pray let me go, for I never did *you* any harm!’

“‘Wretch!’ answered I, ‘you have just insulted the whole of our noble race by speaking of a fox’s “brush” as a “tail!” Such crimes deserve punishment, and you shall not escape.’

“So saying, in spite of her cries and screams, I deliberately and playfully strangled the unhappy wretch, biting her about the head and throat till the life was out of her, and then, sitting down, promised

myself a rich repast. Scarcely, however, had I begun, when a little noise attracted my attention, and, looking up, I saw a large, half-wild cat approaching. I turned, and politely bowed.

“‘Good evening, madam,’ said I.

“‘Good evening, Mr. Fox,’ said she. ‘You seem to have secured a delicious supper. Might I trouble you for a bit?’

“‘Really, madam,’ replied I, ‘I am very sorry to appear unpolite, but I cannot spare a morsel, for I am uncommonly hungry to-night.’

“‘That makes no difference,’ rejoined the Cat; ‘hungry or not, you ought always to be ready to oblige a lady; but since you behave like a brute as you are, I must help myself.’ And without another word she darted at me, and struck me savagely across the face with her paw, scratching me in the most unpleasant manner. I rushed at her directly, and a furious battle began.

“Under ordinary circumstances, I think I should have been more than a match for most cats, but I had hardly recovered from the fatigue of the day before, and, moreover, this was no common cat. She had, I think, been born in the woods, and lived there all her life; therefore she was strong as well as wild, and fought desperately. The wood resounded with our cries; we rolled over and over, and I began to doubt how the fight might end, for my face was cruelly scratched, my eyes were blinded with my own blood, and I should have been glad to have made it

a drawn battle, and to have shared the hare with this fierce lady, when a short, sharp bark was heard near us, and my beloved sister came rushing on the cat.

"Miss Puss was all for peace now, for two to one were odds she had not reckoned on; but we showed her what it was to trifle with a fox's supper. She tried to reach a tree, but we kept worrying her; and though she begged for mercy, she found none, for we did not leave her till her throat was bitten through and through, and she lay dead upon the ground.

"Then I embraced my dear sister; she was overjoyed to see me again, and told me how miserable she had been since we parted at the hen-house. She had determined to stay in that neighbourhood for several days, in the hope of hearing tidings of me, and after missing the hare, she had prowled down to the wood to pick up a casual rabbit, if possible, when she heard the noise of the fight, and, thinking that she recognised my voice, had rushed to my assistance.

"We now made a hearty meal off the unhappy hare, after which we left that wood, and roamed for some distance, until we came to another, very old wood, full of large trees, beech and hornbeam, which had been pollarded for many years, so that their large crown, out of which the branches grew, afforded a comfortable seat for any animal clever enough to run or climb up the thick, gnarled trunks. When the trees slanted, which from their age was constantly the case, the rabbits frequently crept up and sat in the pollarded

crowns, and, in fact, it was not very difficult to do so in the case of most of the trees. We amused ourselves by catching a couple of rabbits in one of these, and having eaten part of one, buried the rest, which served us for dinner next day. A pleasant wood was this, but the remembrance of it is hateful to my memory, as you may well suppose when I tell you what occurred there.

"A day or two we had spent there happily enough, and had made ourselves a very comfortable lair in the crown of one of the largest of the trees, where we were as snug as possible by day, and able to sally forth at night and hunt for our supper.

"But one morning, whilst we were quietly dozing in our tree, we heard voices near us, and the bark of dogs. We remained perfectly still, hoping to escape observation, but it was not to be. A man in a velveteen jacket, accompanied by another, came walking through the wood; the gun upon his shoulder made us suspect he was a keeper, and though we had reason to believe that orders had been given that no foxes should on any account be shot on that estate, yet we knew the race of keepers too well to feel any great security on that account. We therefore kept silence, until a small terrier which was with the keeper came running up, sniffing and smelling at our tree. It then began to growl and bark, and wag its horrid little tail very fast, as it ran round and round the tree. This soon attracted the attention of the keeper, who began to advance

towards the tree with his gun at full cock. Knowing our danger, we thought it best to be off, and accordingly both leaped from the tree and took to our heels. 'Bang, bang!' did I hear immediately, and felt several small shot strike me, but fortunately none did more than lodge in the skin of my back and sting me very slightly. Not so my unhappy sister. For her own sake I had begged her to jump down first, thinking it the better chance; but, alas! it was not so; she was struck full in the side by the contents of the first barrel, and rolled over and over. The last I ever saw of my poor darling was at that moment when the vile little terrier dog was rushing in to worry her, and the inhuman brute of a keeper was running up, no doubt to finish his wicked deed. She died then and there but too surely, and I lost my first, my best, my dearest friend!"

Here the old Fox stopped for a moment, overcome by his exertions; but a cup of hot hares'-brains and sherry having been handed to him, he soon recovered himself and continued his story.

"You may well believe, my children, that I was terribly overcome by the loss of my sister. In fact, I was scarcely myself for some time. I left that part of the world at once, and roamed hither and thither at random, scarcely caring what became of me; neglecting my personal appearance, and wandering about with my brush uncombed, my whiskers untrimmed, and altogether very different from what I had been in my earlier and happier days.

"It was during this time that I met with an adventure upon which I can never look back without shame and remorse, and which I have never revealed to living fox before. It happened that in the course of my rambles I one day reached an extensive wood, in which I discovered a large hole in a bank, which I thought would suit me very well whilst I stayed in that neighbourhood. I found therein a quantity of dry leaves, of which I formed a cozy bed enough, and, after sleeping till evening, went out as usual to forage for my supper. For some time I looked about everywhere without success, until at last I came suddenly on a Stoat, which had caught a hare in her form, leaped on her back, bit her in the neck as she tried to run away, and stuck to her till she dropped fainting from loss of blood. This is the common and clever way in which, as you know, these little animals catch and destroy any hares and rabbits which they can get near, and this particular Stoat had just begun to enjoy the fruits of his skill in hunting when I approached. Without ceremony, I accosted the victorious hunter in these words :

"'Thank you, Mr. Stoat ; I am very much obliged to you for saving me the trouble of catching that hare, and must trouble you to hand it over to me at once.'

"'But, Mr. Fox,' replied the Stoat, 'every one for himself, you know, is fair play. I have had all the trouble of catching this hare for myself, and I really hope that, as a gentleman, you will not think of interfering.'

“‘Necessity, poor fool,’ I answered, ‘has no law; the hare in mine; and you, even if right, must give way to might, as your betters do every day.’

“So I advanced upon the little wretch, who was too small to resist, and could only annoy me by making as disagreeable a smell as possible, which all stoats do when annoyed, and I think this was the worst at the business I ever met. He was in a furious rage, and abused me in dreadful language; but I took his hare, nevertheless, although I felt at the time that it was rather hard upon him. My punishment, however, was near; and you may be sure, my children, that unjust deeds always bring with them their own punishment, sooner or later.

“I carried the hare back to my hole, sat down, and began to devour it, promising myself a light and wholesome supper. Scarcely, however, had I begun when I heard a scuffling sound at the mouth of the hole, and in walked an enormous Badger.

“‘Hallo! young fellow,’ said she, in a rough tone, ‘you’ve got into my den! Turn out, if you please.’

“‘Sweet Mistress Badger,’ replied I, in my softest voice, ‘as I have been the first to take possession of this hole, I trust you will permit me to remain here, at least for this one night.’

“‘Nonsense, you young fool,’ returned the discourteous beast; ‘I shall do no such thing. I had this hole when I was here in the spring, and I mean to have it now, and I don’t mean to be bothered by

foxes either, *you* may depend upon it; so get out, get out!

"So saying, the savage brute advanced towards me, gnashing her teeth; and though I should very much have liked to make a fight for the hole, I was daunted by the sight of her sharp teeth and claws and thick skin: so I still spoke in a civil and humble tone. 'Dear me, Mistress Badger,' said I, 'it *does* seem rather cruel to turn me out like this; but I know that ladies are rather particular, and of course, if *you will* have it so, so it must be. Good evening, madam;' and, taking up the hare in my mouth, I was about to leave the hole.

"'Drop that hare, Fox!' cried the Badger, in a sharp voice: 'will you rob my larder as well as take possession of my house?'

"'Now, really, madam,' I answered, 'this is *not* fair! I caught this hare myself in the wood, and how *can* it be yours?'

"'It was mine as soon as it was inside this hole, Fox,' growled the beast. 'The hare, the hare! give it up!'—and she came between me and the passage which led out of the den in which we were talking.

"I now lost my temper, and flew upon her in a rage. Fool that I was for my pains! A young and well-nurtured fox is no match for a tough badger. Seizing my fore-paw with her cruel mouth, she bit it through till I yelled again and cried for mercy. With a bitter and savage laugh she then loosed my paw, but it was only to bite one of my ears nearly off, injure

the other considerably, disfigure my brush by tearing out a quantity of hair, inflict several other severe wounds upon me, and drive me howling with agony from the hole.

"The worst was even yet to come, for having dragged myself with difficulty to a shady spot about a hundred yards off, as I lay there moaning with pain, who should come by but the vile Stoat. Seeing my condition, he ran up, and dancing round and round me, jeered and abused me to his heart's content. 'Who is ill-treated *now*, dirty robber?' said he. 'Oh you thief! you scoundrel—you who profit by other men's work! Are you rewarded at last? Serve you right, serve you right!' and then, darting in from time to time, he inflicted a sharp bite upon my leg or shoulder, knowing that I was helpless and unable to move.

"My torture was great, and I really believe the little wretch would have gradually worried me to death, if he had not been put to flight by a venerable Owl, who came sailing noiselessly but majestically by, and drove him from me. The Owl, being well-skilled in surgery, induced me to crawl to a hollow tree hard by, where she kept her medicines. She staunched the blood which flowed from my wounds; she rubbed in some wonderful ointment, and attended me for several days with great care. I began to get rapidly better, and was nearly myself again, when Doctor Owl began to talk of payment, suggesting that I might catch her a few young rabbits as a return for what she had done. Not liking to be bothered with this, I bethought me

of a speedier method of repayment, and, on the very next day, asking the old Owl to look at my tongue, whilst she was so doing I suddenly bit off her head. For this cruel and barbarous deed I cannot at this distance of time offer any other excuse than that I could hardly have been in my right mind. Distress at the loss of my sister had, I verily believe, driven me so nearly to the verge of madness that I was scarcely responsible for my actions ; in this manner alone can I account for the wicked folly of which I was guilty. When the death of the Owl became known, the animals in the wood soon made the place too hot to hold me. The Owl had performed many cures among them, and was greatly beloved, and I was bothered out of my life about it, especially by the magpies and jackdaws, of whom there were very many in the place. I therefore thought it best to quit the wood, and, as I did so, had the satisfaction of beholding the dead body of my little enemy, the Stoat, hanging from the branch of an oak, where it had, doubtless, been placed by the keeper who had trapped him. I could not avoid addressing the body of the miserable wretch. 'Vile Stoat,' I said, 'in thy lifetime thou didst greatly plague me, who am by far thy superior, and now thou art justly rewarded for thy crimes. Hang there, vile carcase ! and may all the foes of a fox perish in like manner !'

"I had scarcely finished, when a Jay darted out from a neighbouring bush, and, hovering over my head and shrieking hoarsely, uttered over me, in her

harshest notes, the following lines, which had been composed by the Robin:—

“Vile Fox, with black and wicked heart,
Well hast thou played the traitor’s part,
And, with malignant growl,
Hast raised thy despicable head
To strike thy benefactor dead—
The wise old Doctor Owl.
For this most base and shameful deed
We feathered folk have all agreed
To say, in truthful words,
That thou henceforth for ever hast
(And to thy children may it last !)
The curse of all the birds !

“Mayst thou, in e’en the best-stocked wood,
Be able to obtain no food
Thine hunger to appease ;
May hounds pursue, and man molest—
For thee be never peace and rest,
Or e’en an hour of ease !
The Jay, the Magpie, and the Daw,
And Rook, with honest, homely caw,
In this one prayer unite,
And join in hoping, one and all,
That pain and misery may fall
On thee—and serve thee right !”

“Peace, bird !” said I scornfully ; but she heeded not : and in this manner was I pursued and abused until I fairly took to my heels and ran away into the open country where the birds were not likely to follow. But for many days, ay, for months, I was haunted by the memory of the crime which I had committed. It really seemed, too, as if the wish of the birds was to be fulfilled, for I had more trouble than ever in getting food, and was looked upon so

coldly by the various animals I met, that at last I determined to quit that part of the country altogether. Inasmuch, however, as I carried about with me the memory of my crime, and as one of our great Fox-writers has wisely said, 'It is not your heart and memory, but the climate, which you vary by travelling,' I could not obtain that relief which I sought for a length of time, and even now I shudder when I think of the past.

"Several months had rolled away, and I had wandered over a great extent of country, when the event occurred which I am now about to relate. I had made for myself an agreeable lair in the fern which grew in abundance in a certain wood which I knew—a dry, pleasant wood, and one full of game and rabbits—and had for several days enjoyed life better than I had ever expected to do again, when one morning, between eleven and twelve, I was roughly roused from my dream of security. I heard cheery voices at a distance, speaking in tones of encouragement which I knew but too well to be addressed to those great enemies of our race, the bloodthirsty foxhounds. 'Hie over! Hie in there! Look him up!' and similar expressions greeted my ears, and I heard the hounds come leaping merrily into the wood. Now and then came a shrill note from a young hound, followed by the sharp crack of a whip, and a cry of 'War,' 'Hare!' Nearer and nearer I heard the foe approaching, and, knowing well enough that if I waited too long I should be

surrounded and ignominiously destroyed, I crept quietly from my lair, and through the wood towards the outside hedge.

"I had nearly reached it, when I heard one of the hounds give tongue; a deep bay he gave; I remember it well to this day. A loud voice I could hear shout, 'Hark to Bountiful!' and then came the howl of another and another hound, till a chorus of fearful sounds, carrying terror to my heart, came ringing through the air. I sprang through the hedge into a fresh grass-field over which I intended to gallop at once. But right in front of me stood three or four rustics, who had come out, I suppose, to see the fun, and who, instead of standing quietly aside to give a poor fox fair play, began to throw their arms and caps in the air, and to holloa 'Tally-ho!' in such a violent manner, that I jumped back into the wood as fast as I could, and altered my course altogether.

"I stole along the hedge, and, as I did so, heard a horseman gallop up to my friends the rustics, and ask which way the fox had gone, and on being told that I had re-entered the wood, he used language of a violent and abusive character towards those persons for having 'headed the fox.' I don't know that they did me much good by it, however, for the hounds were not delayed long by my doubling back. I heard them take up the scent again only too soon, and knew that I must leave the wood without loss of time. Accordingly, I slipped out at the corner of a ploughed field, and stole along the hedge for some

little distance, when a loud shout of 'Gone away!' acquainted me with the fact that I had not been unobserved. I crept through the hedge into a grass-field, and, stopping for an instant on the crest of the hill, looked back upon the scene I had just quitted.'

"Close to the wood were crowded together a number of horsemen. Many in red coats; some in black; mostly with whips in their hands, which they kept cracking, and shouting to the hounds, who now burst with a crash out of the covert at the very spot at which I had left it. I saw the horsemen gathering up their reins, and anxiously waiting till the hounds should hit off the scent; and I stayed to see no more. Within a mile were the large Barndale Woods, the earths in which had afforded me a refuge and resting-place before now, and I cantered off at a good pace towards them. I entered the woods several fields ahead of my pursuers, and ran straight to the earths.

"Dreadful moment! they were so carefully stopped that not a mouse could have got in. I now for the first time awoke to the serious nature of the case, and braced my nerves for a great struggle with fate. There was not much time to lose, for I heard the enemy entering the wood; so I trotted off to the further side, descended a sloping hill into the vale below, and put myself into a gallop in the direction of the Knoll Woods, which were distant some two or three miles. When I reached them, I paused to take breath, and, looking back, saw a long line of scattered horsemen following over the vale, which, being full of

big fences and many post-and-rails, gave them, I hope, some trouble to get over. But the hounds, and a select few, among whom I noticed one or two gentlemen in black coats always in the front rank, were too close to be pleasant ; so I skirted the woods and went off into a large field in which a number of sheep were folded. I ran through this, to throw my pursuers off the scent, and then doubling back, crept along the hedge back to the wood, and lay down to rest.

“As I had hoped, the hounds were baffled by the sheep, and I had time to get my breath, but it was not long before I knew by the sound that they had made a lucky cast and were again on my track. I passed through the wood and ran for several miles through the country, my foes following and allowing me no rest. At last I came to a brook, into which I jumped, and after cooling my heated limbs in the most delightful manner, waded down it a little way, and then stepped out and continued my course, hoping that the hounds might be at fault at the running water. But a labouring man with a sheep-dog met me but a short distance from the brook ; the dog chased me, which was annoyance enough, and the man yelled out ‘Tally-ho!’ at such a rate that he brought the foe again upon my heels. I now began to grow tired, and to feel really alarmed for the result, as I had certainly been running for upwards of two hours, and hardly knew what to do.

“Before me was a farm-yard, through which I passed, and on the other side of it came into a green

meadow sloping down towards a river, on the bank of which grew a number of ash pollards, many of which hung over the water. On the opposite bank a wood came down close to the river, which, though beyond the power of any horse to jump, was neither so broad nor so rapid but what one could very easily swim over it. This I had at first thought of doing, and taking refuge in the wood beyond. I remembered, however, that the hounds could cross as well as I, and that I should have them after me directly, whilst, being unacquainted with the country, I should not know where to fly for shelter.

“Then one of those bright ideas suddenly struck me which have so often served our cunning race in similar dangers. Why not take refuge in one of the pollards? No sooner said than done. I got into the river and floated down till I came opposite to one of these trees, whose branches dipped into the water. Laying hold of these I drew myself, not without difficulty, into the crown of the tree, and finding it tolerably hollow at the top, though there was no hollow below, I crouched down and lay panting with fatigue and fright. But in the midst of my danger I could not help casting back a thought to the last time when I had sat in the crown of an old pollard. Oh, sister, sister! you were with me then, but now I have to bear the burden of life alone!

“I had not sat long in my hiding-place before I heard the hounds in full cry come dashing up to the river, and run feathering to and fro upon the bank. Up rode the hunters after them, and there was a

pause at the river. This, however, was of no long duration, and several of them began at once to urge their horses across, whilst others trotted off to a bridge at some little distance. Presently the hounds were in the opposite wood, seeking the scent in every direction. Of course, as I had never been there, they could not hit it off, and from my post of observation I could see the huntsman making casts in vain, and the horsemen riding to and fro on each side of the river. I heard one say, 'What on earth has become of the fox? He must have drowned himself!' And another filled me with dismay by remarking, as he rode not a dozen yards from where I lay, 'Shouldn't wonder if he'd crept into one of them old pollards. Such things *have* happened before now.'

"At last, however, they gave it up as a bad job, and never in my life did I experience greater sensations of joy than when I heard the sound of the horn calling off the hounds, and the loud voice of the huntsman give vent to the welcome words, 'Coop, coop! Come away, come away!' It was over at last, and I was safe!

"However, I did not leave my tree until the sun had hid his head, and the shadows of night were stealing over the land. Then, almost wild with hunger, I descended to the ground, and prowled round the farm-yard. Fancy my delight at seeing at least a dozen charming-looking geese quietly resting in a small stack-yard. I walked deliberately up and sprang upon the largest and fattest of these, who

uttered a shriek of surprise and affright, whilst the others scurried away with a cackling loud enough to wake the whole place.

“ ‘ Good gracious, Mr. Fox !’ screamed the wretched Goose, ‘ what an unprovoked and cruel assault !’

“ ‘ Sweet madam,’ replied I, ‘ I have been chased all day by hounds, and require your company to refresh me.’

“ ‘ Oh, spare me, sir, spare me !’ shrieked my victim. But that was by no means my intention ; so I seized and carried her off to my tree as quickly as possible, and with a loving squeeze of her tender throat soon rendered her incapable of further complaints. Oh, what a goose that was !

“ Labour, my children, gives health and appetite, and hunger is the best of all sauces. My labour had indeed been forced upon me by my enemies, but it had produced the same result, and I never enjoyed a goose more than that which I devoured with so keen a relish upon the occasion which I relate.

“ After this event things seemed to take a more favourable turn. I left the neighbourhood in which I had met with so narrow an escape, and came into a county where I was given to understand that the quantity of wire fences was much against hunting, and where the hounds were not so warmly supported by the gentlemen as in the part of the world which I had left. Here, however, I found that other dangers existed. It was the habit of cruel men to track the footsteps of a fox in the snow, and then, surrounding

with guns the wood in which he lay hid, to drive him out with dogs, and murder him in cold blood.

“It happened upon one occasion that I had met a friend, who invited me to pass Christmas with him in the large wood which he had made his home for the time. I readily consented: another guest had also been invited, and I well remember that we had as good a turkey for our Christmas dinner as ever gladdened the stomach of mortal fox. It had been stolen over-night from the yard of a neighbouring farmer, and right merry did we make with it. Alas! for two of us it was their last Christmas! The howling of beagles broke upon our ears in the frosty morn of the next day, and the shouting of men from different parts of the wood told us but too surely that our enemies were at hand.

“We accordingly separated, my friend and I trotting in one direction, and the second guest in another. When we got to the edge of the wood, my friend jumped out first, and was cantering quietly off, when I saw him suddenly stop, clap his fore-paw on his heart, and roll over—a dead fox; whilst at the same time the roar of a gun from a tree close at hand showed whence and by what kind of foe the fatal blow had been struck. I darted back into the wood, but finding the place full of men and dogs, was obliged to break covert at another corner, where stood two men with guns eagerly watching. I have always thought *that* the narrowest escape of my life. The ‘sportsmen’ (if I may profane the word by applying it to

a base villain who would shoot a fox) were young and ardent; and in their excitement shot hastily at me as I jumped the ditch into the field. By great good luck, the gun of one of them snapped, whilst the charge of the other gun passed under my body as I was in the very act of springing. One—I know not which—sent a second barrel after me, but I was far enough off by that time to escape serious injury. I heard afterwards that the other guest had his head blown off by a demon in the shape of man, as he was standing at the edge of the wood preparing for a dash. Thus was I the only survivor of that merry dinner-party; and bitter were the tears which I shed over the fate of my companions.

“After this I speedily came to the conclusion that, take it all in all, a good hunting-county is the only decent place for a fox of character to live in. True it is, you have the dreadful hounds out three days a week, and even more often occasionally. Still, you have many chances in your favour. The weather may stop them altogether. The scent may be bad. An earth may be left open; and you are safe from those vile contrivances of traps and guns which disgrace such counties as are not properly hunted by a well-supported pack of our legitimate enemies the Foxhounds.

“My children, I have told you the principal part of the adventures of my life, and I feel that life to be now drawing to a close. My breath fails me; my eyes grow dim. No longer are my faculties of hearing

and smelling what they once were; and at this moment I could hardly hold my own against a tinker's cur. I came into this wood not long after the events of which I have just been telling you, and for many years I have now dwelt here. I can truly say that I have, during the whole of that time, duly and carefully followed the sacred rules of Foxdom. Never have I spared goose, fowl, pheasant, or turkey which came within my reach! Never have I neglected, partially at least, to bury the slaughtered game which my appetite would not allow me to finish; nor have I ever made friends or been on good terms with man or dog since I first knew the evil qualities of both. Be it yours, my children, to follow these rules in the same strict manner. You have many foes, but the cunning of a true fox can outwit them all."

Father Reynard here stopped; his breath came shorter and shorter, and he was unable to raise to his lips the cup containing syrup of goose which was handed to him by the faithful Game-botherer. He smiled faintly upon the assembled party, opened his eyes twice, as wide as he could, attempted three times to sneeze, but signally failed each time; and then passed away quietly, without a struggle, softly murmuring the word "chickens" as his spirit fled.

Great was the mourning and lamentation among the Parracre Foxes. To them the treacherous slaughter of the Owl was no such heinous offence as it appears to us. It was the acknowledged duty of a Fox to

do whatever best suited his own convenience under all circumstances ; and if they were disposed to blame the deed of their venerable relative at all, it was rather because of his imprudence in bringing upon himself evil consequences which he ought to have foreseen, than from any actual horror of the deed itself. But, in truth, at this moment they thought but little of the matter. They remembered only the age, the craft, the power of their lost parent ; and they lifted up their voices over his body in a howl of anguish, the sound of which reached the neighbouring kennels, and provoked an answering note of defiance from the bold hounds "Mirthful" and "Melody," who heard the distant noise, and guessed that it betokened some sorrow to their hereditary foes.

The Foxes determined to give Reynard a funeral worthy of his fame. Wrapped up in swan-down, with an outer covering of goose-feathers, his body was placed in a coffin made of plaited rushes, and he was carried by six foxes to the place of burial selected long ago by himself for his grave. Here, according to the barbarous practice which still prevails among foxes, ten rabbits were slaughtered upon the grave, and immediately devoured, the six bearers having the first choice. The skins of the unhappy victims, together with their heads and tails, were buried with the body of their ancient enemy ; after which, the mourners paced seven times round the grave, singing, in a slow and sad measure—


"The Fox went out one moonlight night,"

the favourite melody of the departed chieftain ; then they left Father Reynard to his rest, and slowly retired to their own homes.

Never had such a thing been seen in Parracre before ; for although foxes had come and gone, had been born and died, had been hunted and slain as cubs, and lived to be old and greyheaded, yet never had there been so wise, crafty, and powerful a fox before known in those regions ; and for years and years afterwards, Parracre Foxes were held up before their fellows as being noted for their superior cunning and strength, inherited, as was always supposed, from that great and sagacious Father Reynard who had for so long a time shone forth upon an admiring world as the delight of Parracre and the glory of Foxdom !

THE FLOWER BALL.

THE Flowers determined to give a great Ball on the happy occasion of Miss "Rose Bud" coming out. "John Quil" wrote the invitations, and then the notes were carried round by the "Scarlet Runners." The company was varied in size, colour, and general appearance; but "Rose Bud's" chaperone, Mrs. "Prim Rose," took care that it should be very select, and none but the very best people were invited. There were a number of "Lords and Ladies," who doubtless brought with them a little "London Pride," but all was "Heart's Ease" and merriment; the "Maiden-hair" looked charming in the moonlight, the "Broom" had swept the trim lawn till not even a "Lady's Slipper" could be soiled by crossing it, and even the old "Wallflowers" (of whom a certain number are required to make every ball complete) looked beautiful in the "Night Shade," although they might not have been able to face the "Day's Eye." They would have been "Day Liars," however, whoever they were, if they had found fault with that night's entertainment. "Violet" eyes shone sweetly, and "Pink" cheeks tempted "Two Lips" in every direction.



Shall I tell you some of the Ladies' names and dresses ?

There were "Blue Belles" without number, and not even the "Canterbury Belles," of whom Kent is so proud, could have outshone them. Then there was "Car Nation," in her beautiful pink dress, with a scent-bottle, which had long been in her family, containing the most delicious perfume. "Laura Stinus" and "Rhoda Dendron" both wore dresses of the most beautiful green, though the latter's was of a more delicate tint than that of the former, and her flowers were magnificent. "Polly Anthus" had her velvet dress on, and "Mary Gold" was very fine in her orange colour ; "Anne Emony"'s dress was of variegated hues, whilst "Rose Mary" and "Miss L. Toe" were clad in garments of quiet dark green, and "Lily" and "Jessie Mine" were all in white. Then, besides all these daughters, there were a number of "Son-flowers" too. Sir "Dandy Lion," Sir "R. Butus" and Sir "Perry Winkles" were among the company, as also "G. Ranium" and "X. Otic," Esqs., and many others. Lady "Columbine" charmed everybody by her dove-like appearance, with her "Fox-gloves" on, and a pearl (white as "Snow" drop) in each ear.

"Sage," indeed, were those who attended that Ball : they took no account of "Thyme," and gathered a "Mint" of pleasure ; it was "a nice" entertainment, and no one seemed to "Rue" having accepted the invitation, or said "Let us" be going, till a very late hour.

At last that mad fellow, "Ragged Robin," proposed smoking, and actually brought in a "Box" of "Weeds." "La, burn 'em!" cried the ladies; and "Sweet William" did so immediately, till there was not an "Ash" left!

Oh, it was a right jolly party! Don't you wish that "Yew" had been there?

THE ROBIN AND THE SPARROW.

THE quarrel between the Robin and the Sparrow had long been the occasion of much grief to their mutual friends. No one knew precisely how, when, or where it originally began. All kinds of reports were in circulation, but none could absolutely be proved to be true. One bird would tell you that the Robin had called the Sparrow "a common fellow" to his face, and that, too, before several of the Ladies of his family, and had tauntingly compared his own bright red waistcoat with the more homely garment of the other bird. The next feathered gossip would declare that the Sparrow had brought a number of his friends and eaten up the crumbs which the children had thrown out for the Robin before his very eyes; and some went so far as to say that the pert bird had interrupted the Robin when singing his morning hymn, chirping in with several naughty words, and all of them so much out of tune as to render the interruption doubly painful to any Robin of musical taste and feeling.

But whatever the first cause may have been, the result appeared in a feud between the two birds,

which was exceedingly painful to every one in the Shrubbery. The Blackbird tried to laugh it off, but it was too serious for *that*, and he only offended both parties by trying it. The good old Owl was willing to soothe the angry pair if possible, and, meeting the Nightingale in a midnight tour, persuaded that meek and gentle bird to exercise her kindly offices between them. But the Robin held his head very high, and said that he might *receive*, but never *make* an apology; while the Sparrow flew twittering off to the gutter which ran round below the roof, and said that Nightingales had better mind their own business, which was that of professional songsters.

Repulsed by the one and insulted by the other, the Nightingale went quietly home, and sang a tender song to the moon that very evening, in which she lamented her ill success, and complained that peacemakers always suffered at the hands of those whom they sought to benefit. But as nobody heard the song, except the moon and a young lady who was sitting up listening to the bird's music, and who interpreted it to mean something quite different, I am afraid it did but little good. The moon shone on just the same, and the young lady went to bed and dreamed that a dear friend of hers was speaking to her in the Nightingale's sweet voice, and saying things just as charming as the bird had sung; and so the sun rose next morning, and shone upon the Robin and the Sparrow with their hearts unchanged, and full of bitterness against each other!

While this sad state of things lasted, there could of course be no comfortable life or society among the birds. Already there were little parties formed on each side, some complaining of the Robin's behaviour as the cause of all the mischief, others as vehemently declaring that the fault was entirely on the side of the Sparrow. The "*Bird Gazette*," a newspaper which had a large circulation among the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, warmly espoused the Robin's cause, whilst the "*Feathered Messenger*," an influential and well-written journal, was entirely in the interest of the Sparrow.

Every well-disposed bird viewed with sorrow this daily-increasing bitterness in their community, and there were even heard whispers at one time that it would be better to drive both Robin and Sparrow out of the place altogether. This, however, was but idle talk, and the business might have been carried on till this very moment, if it had not been that a daring act on the part of the Sparrow brought matters to a crisis.

With the view, as is generally supposed, of insulting and annoying the Robin, he persuaded a Tomtit, his faithful ally in mischief (who, as is commonly the case with such birds, was sitting on a round of beef, doing nothing in particular), to enter the Wren's nest during her absence, and disarrange her eggs in the most disagreeable manner.

Every one knows that the Robin is devoted to the Wren, and she, being by the rules of wrenhood

obliged to desert her nest immediately, flew sobbing and crying to her friend for comfort and advice.

Swelling with indignation, the Robin boldly demanded of the Tomtit what he meant by such a gross and unprovoked outrage upon the harmless Wren. The Tit, being a cool sort of hand, was at first for demanding what business the Robin had in the matter, and hinted that his relations with the Wren were not such as to justify his taking her part in the manner which he appeared to contemplate. But the keen black eye of the Robin, and his determined manner, soon drove the Tomtit to confess that he had been put up to it by the Sparrow, and the wrath of the Robin was at once turned in the right direction.

He flew immediately to the Sparrow, who, surrounded by his kith and kin, was sitting in an apple-tree near the spot, and told him to his face that the bird was no gentleman who could be a party to such tricks upon a lady.

The Sparrow retorted, with a sneer, that he knew how to behave as well as any Robin that ever picked up crumbs from a window-sill, and that the Robin was nothing better than an ill-mannered bumpkin to intrude himself upon another bird's domestic circle as he was then doing.

Upon this the Robin threw down a rotten egg before the Sparrow, which is the well-known method among birds of bidding each other mortal defiance. The Sparrow picked it up, and it was at once known

that no course was now left to the enemies but to meet and fight it out.

Next morning, the Chaffinch, on the part of the Sparrow, met the Green Linnet, on behalf of the Robin, and arranged the when and where of the fight. It was to be at six o'clock on the morning of the next Thursday, on the lawn in front of the house, before the big elm with the seat under it, and due notice was to be given to all birds who choose to attend.

During the day previous to the battle each of the two heroes was visited by a large number of his feathered friends, and the deepest interest was shown in the approaching battle. The Sparrow passed the day with his family on the eaves of the house, flying down occasionally to regale himself with young peas in the garden, and engaging himself in a good deal of harmless twitter in his usual careless manner. The Robin, on the contrary, devoted the day to the arrangement of his worldly affairs, in the event of the battle having a disastrous result. He made his will with all due care and in legal form, leaving his possessions fairly divided among his family, and a parcel directed to Jenny Wren, which contained two of his best breast-feathers, secured by a silken string to a bundle of loving letters which had passed between them. He drew up several papers of memoranda for his children, by which they were to be guided as to the places in which each should take up his abode, and which contained many sensible remarks which

might serve to assist them in regulating their conduct towards the other birds in the Shrubbery. Moreover, he gave up a part of the day to thoughtful meditation, and sang his evening hymn in his usual devout manner, surrounded by his affectionate family, who wept bitterly, as they thought it might possibly be for the last time that they were listening to their beloved parent.

Night came on, and the birds were all at roost, though doubtless there were some to whom sleep was a stranger, anxious as they were about the important matter which was to be decided on the morrow.

Bright rose the sun upon that eventful morrow morn, and before he had well risen, the Chaffinch and the Green Linnet were at their work, measuring and preparing the ground upon which that dread combat was about to take place.

Soon after five o'clock birds of all sorts and sizes came hurrying to the spot, and it was plain enough that there would be no lack of spectators to view the battle.

About a quarter before six the shrill cries of many of the feathered tribe announced the arrival of the two heroes upon the ground. The Sparrow marched proudly up, surrounded by a host of friends. Very many of his own race gathered about him, holding aloft his banner, which attracted much attention. It was of pure white, with a broad mauve lining. In the centre was painted, as natural as life, a Robin lying upon his back, dead, with an arrow in his breast;

by whom stood a Sparrow, with his foot upon the neck of his slaughtered foe, and holding a bow in his hand ; whilst above his head was inscribed, in letters of jet colour, the arrogant motto, " Who killed Cock Robin ? " and the bird was pointing with his bow to himself, and looking up at the motto, as if to supply the answer in his own person. Behind the Sparrow came a large number of Chaffinches, bearing their famous banner, on which was represented a stack of wheat, with the words beneath, " Grain for the Birds, and the Birds for Grain ; " whilst a large number of Tomtits, long-tailed tits, and others of the tit tribe, came following on in dense array, with their great yellow flag waving amongst them, on which you might see their well-known device of a Tomtit flying out of a window with a broiled kidney in his mouth, whilst a scroll over his head bore the inscription " Tit-bits for the Tits."

Other birds were there also who, for one reason or another, sided with the bold Sparrow. The humble Hedge Sparrows, a mild and feeble race, whose sympathies were really with the Robin, who had often taken their part against their oppressors the House Sparrows, and had even abused the Cuckoo to his face for his shameful habit of compelling his mate to lay her egg in the poor Hedge Sparrow's nest, and leave to the latter the whole trouble of rearing the young Cuckoo—the humble Hedge Sparrows, I say, were obliged to follow meekly behind their tyrants, carrying bandages, in case of the Sparrow being wounded

and being bound to applaud him and sing his praises as the party marched along. The Thrush, too, sided with the Sparrow, though principally out of jealousy of the Blackbird, who was a warm partisan of his brother songster, the Robin. The Jackdaw, being of a pert and forward disposition, recognised a fellow spirit in the Sparrow, and backed him up accordingly; while the Jay, whom the Robin had more than once rebuked for his habit of screaming on a Sunday, and his general disregard of all that was good, threw his weight also into the opposite scale, and screeched himself hoarse in the Sparrow's favour.

Nor was the Robin without his friends. It is true that his family were by no means so numerous as that of his opponent; and Jenny Wren, moreover, was so nervous and timid, that she could only hide in a neighbouring holly-bush and look on, with tearful hopes for his safety. But he bore himself right gallantly; and with his light-brown coat carefully brushed, and his bright red waistcoat without a spot, the little bird looked every inch a gentleman. The Golden-crested Wrens supported him to a bird, and their beautiful plumage was the theme of universal admiration. The Water Wagtails, too, were in his train, for they had made great friends with him through having several times built their nests in the faggot-stack, when Mrs. Robin had her little family in the stock of the ivy against the wall hard by. The Green Linnets, too, were in attendance in good force; and the merry Blackbirds came in great numbers, chanting

aloud their ancient war-song, "Sing a song of sixpence," which had a great effect in cheering the spirits of the other birds. The Woodpigeon, too, was there, with his spotless banner of white, on which was written, "Love me, love my mate;" and it was well known that the Rooks were friendly also, only that at such an early hour most of them were engaged in a newly-ploughed field upon the adjoining farm, and being peaceful birds, and of a practical turn of mind, they preferred following the plough to the more exciting but less profitable game to which the other birds had been attracted. The Nuthatch, in his coat of delicate grey, and his breast of that light flesh-colour which, bearing the appearance of a very pale red, gave him his claim to a distant relationship to the Robin, followed that bird—as he gave out to every one, from family feeling—and kept running up the elm, and tapping loudly, which was his usual way of declaring his sentiments.

But what pleased the Robin most was the conduct of the Partridge, who came all the way from the neighbouring stubble-field to wave his horse-shoe banner in favour of his old friend. I must not omit to mention the Robin's own banner, which was of red, white, and blue, and bore upon it the picture of a Robin picking up crumbs from a door-step, with the motto over his head, "I eat, and give thanks."

When the two parties had approached, each on his own side of the ground, the first proceeding was to select an umpire. All wished for the Pheasant; but he turned up his beak at the whole affair, and said

that he had really no time to attend to the petty squabbles of little birds. The Owl, who would also have been generally acceptable, also held aloof from the whole proceeding—not, however, from any feeling of pride, such as that which influenced the Pheasant, but because, being a peaceful bird, and one, moreover, of a retiring disposition, she hated quarrels of all sorts and kinds, and preferred to shun the broad light of day sooner than be obliged to witness them.

After some little discussion, therefore, a worthy Fowl was selected as umpire, and accordingly took up her position upon a hencoop immediately under the elm, from which she could easily see the whole affair. Each of the contending champions and their friends marched twice round the ground, singing loudly ; and as every bird sang his own song, in his own key, without the slightest reference to anybody else, you may suppose that the music was not entirely in accordance with the strictest rules of tune, time, or harmony.

At last matters were so far advanced, that the friends of each hero were ranged on either side, and a vacant space was left for the battle in the midst. Then it was that the Swallow flew up, as herald of the course, and declared that all birds must keep silence whilst he pronounced aloud the rules of the coming fight. The Jay instantly began to scream as loudly as he could, being at best a turbulent bird ; but the remonstrances of the Sparrow, backed by a fearful look from the Fowl, soon silenced him ; and the Swallow proceeded to say that the battle was to be

a fair stand-up fight between the two birds; that no one was to interfere, on any pretext whatever, until one of the two cried for mercy; and that any bird who presumed to break into the circle reserved for the warriors, or to help one or the other, should be liable to have his tail pulled out forthwith, and his mate's next year's eggs given to the Cuckoo. This solemn warning having been given, the Swallow twittered three times, turned seven summersaults in the air, and announced that the fight might begin.

Forth then stepped the bold Sparrow into the ring, holding in one of his claws a sharp pin (which he had stolen that very morning from the nursery window, on which nurse's pincushion lay drying, after baby had thrown it into the basin), and in the other a bit of cork, which he had cleverly manufactured into a shield; and as he came forward he boldly chirped defiance to the Robin:—

“Come on! thou Robin, small and mean,
Come on! and fight me hand to hand!
Thou canst not really think, I ween,
Against the Sparrow's might to stand!
Come on! thou cringing friend of man,
Thou crumb-fed varlet, come to fight,
And prove to all thy timid clan
Thy vaunted skill—thy boasted might!
Come, Robin, quit the haunts of men,
And leave for once thy pious words;
Lest both thy wife and Jenny Wren
Despise thee—like the other birds!
Sing, Robin, sing! thy foolish whim
Indulge, whilst thou canst do so still,
And, with the echo of thine hymn,
Thy blood the Sparrow Chief will spill!”

But the Robin stood out boldly to the front, and his black eyes sparkled with honest rage as he sang his answer to the Sparrow's bold defiance :—

“Thou corn-stealing Sparrow ! thou knave of the eaves,
I'll meet thee in battle, nor ask for delay ;
Not a bird on the ground who the Sparrow believes
As honest a thief as the Magpie or Jay !
Deep down in a gutter thy sire built his nest,
Too timid, poor villain, to build in a tree,
And tho' speedily shot for his crimes, he was blest
That he lived not to rear such an offspring as thee !
Then bluster no more with that arrogant tongue
With which thou hast ventured thy foe to defy ;
Right, Justice, and Truth to the Robin belong,
And safe is the cause which on these can rely !”

Then the two birds rose on their feet to their full height, fluttered their wings mightily, and rushed upon each other. To match the Sparrow's pin, the Robin had armed himself with a strong thorn, supplied to him by the Butcher-bird from the tree on which he usually stuck his insects before devouring them.

Those who know the habits of this bird are aware that, as bees, cockchafers, and such creatures are his favourite food, he chooses a tree with long sharp thorns for his larder ; and therefore the weapon with which he furnished the Robin was one of a formidable character. For a shield, the Robin had kneaded up a piece of dough which he had found in the back-kitchen yard, and which, as it turned out, fortunately for him, had not had time to become thoroughly hardened ; for a laughable and curious

incident now occurred. Both birds struck furiously the one at the other. The Robin's thorn broke short off against the cork shield of his enemy, while the latter's pin was so firmly imbedded in the Robin's dough, that no power of his could remove it.

In this situation they stood for an instant, the Sparrow tugging at his pin, and the Robin brandishing the stump of his thorn, amidst the cheers and laughter of the surrounding crowd. Then the Robin suddenly dropped both thorn and shield, and the Sparrow speedily following his example, they set to, tooth and nail, with their natural weapons. Both birds were brave, and both in good condition; and, as their size and strength were tolerably equal, it was impossible to guess which would have the best of it. They wrestled and tussled fiercely, and for some time the bystanders could see nothing but legs and wings intermixed and interwoven as if they belonged to one bird alone, and an occasional small feather, torn from the breast or wing of one or the other, floating in the air above them.

Meanwhile the place re-echoed with the cries of the partisans around, each encouraging his favourite champion. "Into him, Sparrow!" screamed the hoarse voice of the Jay above the rest. "Well done, Robin!" answered the brave Partridge. "Speak to him, Rob!" said the Nuthatch from the elm above. "Peck his eye out, Sparrow boy!" replied the Tomtit from below.

At last, panting with exertion and breathless with

rage, the brave birds separated for a moment, trembling in every limb, and with wings quivering with combined fatigue and excitement. Then was seen an ominous drooping of one of the Sparrow's eyelids, and a bare place upon his head ; while a large wing-feather on the ground, and crimson spots which dyed his waistcoat a still deeper red, showed that the Robin had fared no better than his adversary.

After a moment's breathing-time, they were at it again like wild cats, and once more the welkin rang with the cries of their supporters. Now flying up a foot from the ground, now rolling together on the grass, the little heroes struggled hard for victory, and neither yielded an inch.

Again they parted, and eagerly did the friends of each look at their pet. What is this that they see? No longer a drooping eyelid, but one of the Sparrow's eyes pecked clean out of his head, and blood slowly dropping from his head and beak. The Robin's breast, on the other side, had suffered severely, and the loss of another wing-feather made him appear somewhat lop-sided as he rallied once more to the battle.

Again they joined, though somewhat less eagerly than before ; for their strength, if not their courage, was evidently failing. But the friends of the Sparrow saw with regret that he staggered wofully as he closed with his foe. The loss of an eye put him at terrible disadvantage ; and could the Robin last a little longer, there was little doubt that the victory would

be his. The crafty Jay could no longer endure it. Not only did he remember his old grudge against the Robin, but, having made several bets with the Night-hawk, and other birds of roving and gambling habits, he feared that he should be a heavy loser if the Sparrow should now be defeated. Watching his opportunity, therefore, when a vigorous peck from the Robin, which the Sparrow had intercepted with his foot, had clearly broken one of the toes of the latter, he suddenly darted into the ring, and, bawling loudly, in his harshest scream, "A foul blow!—a foul blow! Down with him!" he bestowed a peck upon the unlucky Robin, which broke his wing and laid him prostrate at the feet of his raging foe.

All was confusion in a moment. With shrill and indignant cries, the birds on either side rushed into the middle of the space which had been reserved for the combatants, and filled the air with a noise enough to wake the "Seven Sleepers." The Sparrow, knowing no mercy, leapt in a moment upon his fallen foe, and called loudly for a weapon to destroy him. The crowd pressed too closely to enable his friends to supply him with a sword, and he began to grope about, as well as his darkened sight would let him, for the Robin's own thorn, pecking furiously at the poor bird whilst he vainly searched.

All this took place in a minute, and another minute would probably have seen the end of the battle and of the Robin, when suddenly the folding-doors of the dining-room were thrown open, and Kate and Ffine

came bounding on to the lawn. The latter ran barking up to the birds, who instantly fled in all directions, two friendly Chaffinches carrying the half-blind Sparrow into the nearest border of evergreens. But the Robin lay there alone—senseless, and bleeding from his wounds.

Kate ran up to him, and lifted him from the ground at once—

“Oh, you poor dear little thing,” she said, “how they have hurt you; I am so afraid you will die.” And the tears came into her blue eyes as she gazed upon the poor wounded bird. “But you shall not die if I can help it,” she added; and she took him straight back into the house, followed by Fifine, who looked very grave, and appeared to understand it all perfectly.

She carried the Robin to her mamma, and, after a little talk, they settled that Jemima, the nursery-maid, who took care of the parrot and the canaries, was likely to be the best bird-doctor. So to Jemima the bird was taken, and his wing carefully bound up, and his poor bleeding breast gently sponged with lukewarm water. As this was being done, the Robin slowly opened his eyes, and seemed to know at once that he was among friends, for he never offered to move or flutter, but lay there as quiet and patient as a Christian, and a great deal more so than many Christians would have done under the circumstances. For if a Christian little girl had had her arm broken and her chest wounded, and woke up to find herself

Being washed and doctored by robins, I don't think she would have lain quiet at all ; and of course it was just the same to the Robin, waking up and finding he was being washed and doctored by girls. But being a discreet Robin, he *did* lie still, and the consequence was that he began to mend directly, and never had an hour's drawback till he was perfectly recovered. Of course this took some time, but Kate was as careful of him as if he had been her own pet from the beginning of her life, and you may depend upon it he wanted for nothing. What wonder was it that the Robin was grateful for ever? What wonder is it that robins sing to Kate, and hop on Kate's window, and I dare say would eat crumbs out of Kate's hand if she would hold it still long enough to let them do so?

The Sparrow, meanwhile, had a worse time of it. He hid among the evergreens for some time, and was then conveyed to his nest by his friends, after a narrow escape from a cat, who tried to get the blind side of him. He kept his nest for a long time, and was never quite the same Sparrow again, being, moreover, sadly disfigured by the loss of his eye. You will be glad to hear, however, that the bitterness between him and the Robin soon passed away. Like true English birds, having regularly fought it out, after a while they shook claws again, and were as good friends as ever. Just so, if children or grown-up people chance to have a quarrel, although it is not desirable that they should fight, or by any means necessary that they should break an arm or lose an

eye, it is always the best plan to make up matters as soon as possible, and live in a friendly manner.

But you will ask what became of the other birds when the Robin and the Sparrow left the field? Most of them flew home to their several occupations, and I was never told that they took any more part in this affair. But I am sure you will all be glad to know that the brave old Cock Partridge singled out the treacherous Jay, chased him round the Shrubby till he caught him close by the yew fence at the corner of the croquet-ground, and gave him the most unmerciful licking that he ever had in his life. So you see that treachery and bullying gets punished somehow or other, and now you know why jays are always so shy, and fly screaming away into the thickest part of the woods at the sight of an honest bird or man.

And this is all I know about the affair of the Robin and the Sparrow.

THE COW THAT LOST HER TAIL.

THERE was once a Cow who had the misfortune to lose her tail. History does not tell us the exact manner in which this unhappy event took place. Perhaps some enemy struck the foul blow which deprived the poor animal of this useful ornament. Perhaps some tail disease made amputation necessary. Perhaps the mowers struck the tail off accidentally with their scythes. Perhaps—but there are so many “perhaps’s” in the world that I will not try to guess any more, but will tell you what I really *do* know about the matter, which was told me by the fillet of veal we had for dinner the other day, which belonged to a Calf who was own son to the very Cow to whom the affair happened! Wise old George Herbert, who, in his day, wrote pretty poetry and invented curious proverbs, had one saying, the truth of which our Cow certainly proved. Said he, in his wisdom: “The cow never knoweth the value of her tail till she loseth it;” and this was the case with our poor friend. In former days she had thought but little of her tail, and, indeed, had sometimes spoken of it as rather an inconvenience, getting between her legs in an awkward

manner, and being of little use at best. But the blessings we think least of in our hours of idle prosperity, are really often those the loss of which would be the most serious misfortune which could happen to us. And thus, when the Cow found that her tail was actually gone, she began to miss it greatly, and to regret its loss uncommonly.

In the hot summer days, when the cattle collected around the trees to stand under the welcome shade, the flies came buzzing about as usual, annoying the poor creatures as much as they could. Swish, swish, went the tails of the other cows, brushing off the tiresome insects, and fanning their own poor sides at the same time. But our Cow was a helpless victim to the tormentors, who settled upon her by hundreds at a time, and drove her nearly wild. Then when the animals were tired of standing still, and scampered across the field down to the pond at a fast gallop, with their tails stretched out at full length, our poor Cow galloped too, but she cut the most ridiculous figure without a tail, and felt very small among the well-tailed cows around her. In the pond, too, it was no better ; the flies were more troublesome than ever there, and she was obliged to walk in much deeper than she liked, because she could not brush them away for want of a tail.

What made it most trying of all was the scorn and ridicule of the other cows, who would never leave off laughing at her misfortune. Nay, the very calves would not let her alone, and old Jessie, the donkey,

was almost the only one who had a kind word for her ; for she herself had been so jeered at and insulted through life, that she had learned to have some feeling for other people when they were in the like case.

At first the Cow tried to endure their laughter quietly, and put the matter off with a joke, saying that "at least no one could now accuse her of being a tale-bearer." But this was foolish, you know, particularly as the words are not spelt the same, which the other cows knew perfectly well, and only "chaffed" her all the more, until her life really became a burden to her.

Under these painful circumstances, she at last determined to seek the assistance of a venerable Farrier who lived near, and who had great experience in all the diseases and afflictions with which mortal cows are surrounded. He was as kind-hearted as he was skilful, and, on the promise of a pint of milk daily for a week, expressed his readiness to provide the Cow with a new tail. The promise was willingly given, and the bargain struck. Before the week was out, a tail, carefully made of thick plaited straw, was cleverly fastened to the Cow's back, painted the colour of a proper tail, and warranted by the Farrier to act in every way like the lost ornament.

Proud and happy at her cure, the Cow returned to her companions, and swished her tail about as merrily as any of them for a couple of days. The other animals, whatever they might have thought, said but little, and were in truth glad enough that a cure had

been found which might be required by any one of them at a future time.

Not long, however, did this state of things last. A shower of rain washed off some of the paint, and, as she was lashing her sides near to a thick hedge, her tail caught in a bramble, which tore out several straws when she moved on. After this, everything she caught in, or touched, damaged the tail more and more—the straw came unplaited, some fell out each time she lashed her sides, and in a very short time she was as tail-less and miserable as ever.

Again she sought the Farrier, and laid her case before him, complaining, with a melancholy “moo,” that his cure had proved ineffectual. The worthy man expressed his deep regret, but, in consideration of her grief, agreed to furnish another tail at the same price as before. This time it was one which no bramble could tear, for it was made of clay, thoroughly beaten up and hardened, and then twisted into the form of a tail. It was carefully fastened on by the Farrier, painted again as the straw tail had been, and appeared likely to answer in every respect.

The Cow returned again to her friends with joy, and, although she found her new instrument rather awkward at first, was in great hopes that it would be of much service to her. For several days all went well, and she recovered her health and spirits, which had begun to suffer. But one afternoon, whilst the cattle were out in the meadows, a storm came on, which raged for several hours. The rain came down in

torrents, and there was no shelter to be had. Alas for our Cow! the paint of her tail gradually dropped off in large drops, and little by little the hard clay softened with the wet. When she lashed her sides, a long clay mark was left behind, just as if some one had struck her with a muddy whip, and she felt her tail slipping from her, and becoming lighter and smaller at every lash. By the next morning she presented a lamentable appearance, and it was impossible for her to make any use of the stunted and injured bit of tail which was left.

She betook herself at once to her friend the Farrier, who did his best to comfort her, and, after some thought over the matter, agreed to supply her with a third tail, for the gift of a pint of milk every day for a fortnight. This was to be a more expensive tail, and required more care in making, and greater strength in the fastenings. So you will think, when I tell you that it was made of iron, and in fact was very like a pump-handle. It was duly painted and put on, and once more our Cow appeared among her friends with a respectable appendage.

But a new and cruel difficulty now appeared. The weight of the new tail was so great as to cause the Cow serious inconvenience. She did not feel it at first, but, as days wore on, it seemed to drag her backwards by its weight, and made it necessary for her to rest frequently and for some time. Then, when she lashed her sides, it struck her such a blow as nearly to break her ribs, and in a short time she found she

really had no strength left to lash her sides at all. Day by day she grew weaker and weaker, until at last it was evident that her constitution would break down under the suffering which she had imposed upon herself by the purchase of this iron tail. She therefore went to the Farrier, who was much shocked at her appearance, but at once carefully removed the tail, and gave her some strengthening medicine. He then told her that it was plain that a light tail was the only thing for her case, and that, although straw had failed, he thought a hay tail might answer the purpose. He therefore twisted a tail of hay with great care, secured it as firmly as he could, and sent her off without asking for payment.

The change was indeed delightful; she swished the flies away as easily as possible—ran with her tail stretched out as well as the best of them, and speedily recovered her health and spirits. But at the end of a week her dream of happiness suddenly ended in an unexpected manner. She was standing lazily under a tree, close to the wire-fence by the road, dreaming of the past and speculating on the future in a sleepy manner, when, a fly having settled on her back, she attempted as usual to brush it off with her tail. Some slight resistance appeared to be offered, as if some one was holding her by the tail, and when it yielded, to her horror the tail fell far short of the fly, and in fact only just touched her side at all. Turning round in the most indignant surprise, she beheld a half-starved tinker's horse, who had been browsing by the





The Cow that lost her Tail.

road-side, and, seeing what he supposed to be a tempting wisp of hay hanging to a cow within his reach, had quietly put his head over the wire-fence and eaten off more than half her tail before she found it out. She moo'd loudly with rage, but could do nothing, and had, moreover, the mortification of seeing the wayfaring-beast enjoying his last mouthful with the keenest relish.

Driven to despair by this new misfortune, the poor Cow now applied once more to her friend the Farrier, assuring him that she would do anything in the world to obtain real and lasting relief from her affliction, for she felt that if she could not be re-tailed, she should meet her end before long in tail-less despair.

The man replied that he certainly thought hers a peculiarly hard case, and that luck seemed against her altogether. He thought, however, that if she could go to the expense of a pint of milk daily for a month, he could afford her a remedy with which she would not be disappointed.

The poor Cow eagerly consented to his demand, and he then produced an india-rubber tail, of great strength and beauty. It was at once light enough to enable her to brush off the flies without the least difficulty, pliant enough to be easily moved to and fro at pleasure, and strong enough to resist the assaults of brambles, whilst it offered no temptation to the hay-loving horse, and was superior to the effects of the most drenching rain that ever descended upon the earth.

When fairly in possession of this splendid tail, the delight of our old friend knew no bounds. There was no tail like it in the field. She could now run, fling out her tail, and swish her sides to her heart's content. She could brush away flies with the best of them, and apparently there lay before her a long life of uninterrupted happiness. Alas! how sad it is that the bright and beautiful fades so soon from off this earth! The happiest moments of our lives are always the shortest; and the sun of our prosperity only seems to shine for a moment, that we may feel the contrast more bitterly when the clouds of sorrow darken and shut it from our sight. Man's joy is brief; and cows are no better off than men. One short month our Cow wagged her tail in blissful security, and then came a return of trouble.

On one memorable evening, after a day passed in the usual routine of a cow's life, she was duly milked and driven into her happy lodge, where she lay down peacefully to sleep. She dreamed of grassy meadows along the river's side, where the cowslips seemed to flourish and to kiss the streamlet's tide; and she fancied she was wandering about the flowery mead, and stopping here and there upon the clover-grass to feed. She thought of happy days gone by, and joys she used to feel; of calves that she had loved and lost—all long since turned to veal. And she wished that cows did not to men less valuable seem for calves that they present to them than for their milk and cream. She slept, I say, so peacefully, and dreamt of former

joys, and all around were hushed to rest—she never heard a noise; but on she slept, and seemed to feel her milk would never fail, as long as she her treasure kept—that india-rubber tail!

That was the kind of dream our Cow had, full of pleasant things and no thought of coming evil. But towards morning she woke with a start, and looked sharply round, as she heard a pattering of little feet hurrying away over the straw on which she lay. Milkpails and dairymaids! What on earth was this? More sorrow, more trouble, more misfortune. The thievish, wicked, and ravenous rats had been at her tail. They had been sharp enough to discover that it was not real flesh, and, this being the case, that they could freely nibble it without being detected by its sleeping owner. And it must be confessed that the rascals had made the best use of their opportunity. It was so gnawed, nibbled, torn, and eaten, that a mere apology for a tail was all that remained. No more peace—no more comfort—no more repose and happiness for the wretched Cow. She bellowed with anguish, rendered worse by the appearance of a venerable Rat, who sat upon the manger hard by, licking his lips, with greedy remembrance of his last bite.

“O you vile robber!” exclaimed the poor Cow; “what have I ever done to *you* that you should treat me thus? Cowardly thieves that you all are, I wish the rat-catchers had the whole lot of ye!”

“Madam,” returned the Rat, gravely, “your observa-

tions are scarcely polite ; but I can make every allowance for your wounded feelings. But let this event teach you to avoid shams. If people *will* wear things which are not their own, sooner or later they are sure to be found out ; and whether it be the case of a young lady's back hair or a cow's tail, of course it is not pleasant for deceivers that their deceit should be exposed : this exposure, however, is part of an honest rat's duty, and I confess I am rejoiced to have been able to assist in detecting an impostor."

So saying, the Rat retired to his own place, leaving the un-tailed Cow to moo out her grief alone. What could she do now ? Where could she go to ? Her confidence in the Farrier was really shaken, for had he not re-tailed her five times, and each time failed to produce an article that would really last ? Straw, clay, iron, hay, and now india-rubber, all had come to nought ! Was it of any use to try once more, or should she leave off in despair, and make the best of a bad job ? In her doubt and difficulty she bethought herself of kind Jessie the donkey, and besought her advice.

"Mother Cow," said Jessie, somewhat flattered at the confidence in her judgment which was shown by her neighbour in consulting her, "I am a meek and humble animal, and fear to give advice which may not be agreeable. At the same time, if you value my poor opinion, which is based upon my own experience of the world, it is very much at your service. I, too, have not been without my trials in life. I have con-

stantly been called an ass to my face, and that, too, possibly not without reason. I have been told that I am stupid, when I feel that I am only somewhat less quick than might be in understanding matters of a subtle nature. I have been called idle and lazy when I am really only constitutionally slow ; and I have not unfrequently been termed an obstinate brute when I was really only showing that patient resolution which true wisdom dictated. Along with all this abuse, I have had quite my full share of kicks and blows, and may fairly say that my life has had more of the rough than of the smooth in it. But I have always found it best to endure patiently and quietly the trials which come upon me, and time has wrought its own cure. My skin is now so tough that I feel but little of the blows given me, and the abuse falls upon my accustomed ears without producing the smallest effect upon my tranquil spirit. Why should not the same line of conduct prove of advantage in *your* case? I think you have perhaps taken some unnecessary trouble, and flurried yourself a good deal too much. Learn to put up with that which cannot be avoided, and you will be a happier Cow, as I am sure that my misfortunes and hardships have made me a more contented donkey."

The Cow listened with attention to Jessie's remarks, and then told her of the words which had fallen from the Rat, and asked her whether she thought there was anything in them ; because, if shams were really as wrong as he had represented, she had certainly not

done well in applying to the Farrier for false tails, and accepting them at his hands.

"Upon that point," replied the Donkey, "I am hardly capable of giving an opinion. Undoubtedly it is better to be always honest and straightforward, and not to pretend to have that which you do not really possess. But you cannot say that a man is wrong to wear a cork leg if he has lost his own limb; and although ladies' hair is a matter quite out of *my* line of business, I don't see any great harm in their using any device to make themselves look as nice as possible. The case of a Cow and her tail is very different. A useful article is lost, and you try to replace it by one as nearly like it as you can get. There is no sham in the matter of which any decent Cow need be ashamed, and the Rat's remarks only sprang from his own evil nature and nasty disposition."

Somewhat re-assured by the words of her friend, the Cow thanked her with a grateful bellow, and, after pondering for some time over what she had said, determined to go to the Farrier once more; not to ask for any more tails, but to have the stump of her old tail so treated that she might suffer as little future inconvenience as possible.

She found the good man as kind as usual, and he expressed both surprise and sorrow at the result of his last experiment. He was quite ready to suggest that other tails should be tried, and produced an article manufactured of rope, which he said would be

by no means a disagreeable substitute for the lost appendage. But the Cow steadily refused. The words of the Donkey had made a great impression upon her, and she was resolved to endure with patience the affliction with which she had been visited.

Now in this particular, my children, you will do well to follow the example of our friend the Cow. It is true that Providence has not adorned you with tails, and you are therefore secure from the particular misfortune which befell this worthy animal. But aches and pains are things to which children—and grown-up people too—are unhappily subject, and when you have these, or any more serious illness, to bear, the great thing is to determine to be patient and gentle, and endure the pain bravely and quietly, by which means, not only does it really become more easy to bear, but your conduct makes those with whom you live love you better, and become more anxious to do all they can to help and comfort you. So it was with our Cow. When she returned to the field with her stump of a tail properly dressed, and made no further pretence of concealing her misfortune, the scorn and laughter of the other animals soon gave way to pity. This pity grew into admiration as they beheld the meek spirit with which the Cow submitted to her affliction, the patience which she displayed under the attacks of the flies, and the ready kindness with which she assisted any other animal to whom her services could be of value. In fact, she became celebrated among all the animals as one to whom any one might apply for

advice with the certainty that it would be cheerfully and wisely given. This calm disposition of mind and contented spirit were not without their effect upon her bodily condition. Her milk became so plentiful and so rich that she was soon confessed to be the most valuable Cow upon the whole farm, and the dairymaid could never say enough in her favour, whilst her owner declared that he would never part with her whilst she lived.

But her chief reward was yet to come. Standing one day by the wire-fence, near the very spot where her hay-tail had been so unceremoniously taken from her, she heard a noise of approaching hoofs upon the road, and up trotted the same half-starved Horse who had inflicted the injury upon her. Accosting her with his politest neigh, he told her that he had heard of her good deeds and kindly disposition from many animals, and had often regretted the ill deed towards her of which he had been guilty.

"I do not know, madam," he continued, "how far I may be able to make any atonement for my crime, but, in the course of my rambles, I have met a venerable Giraffe, attached to a travelling circus, who, having long studied the subject of tails, told me that he was possessed of an ointment which had performed some most remarkable cures in cases which had been previously deemed hopeless. After much earnest solicitation, I obtained from him a pot of this priceless medicine, which I respectfully offer for your acceptance."

The Cow was much touched by this act of kindness and generosity on the part of the Tinker's Horse, and, though she had but little faith in the ointment, and felt it but too probable that the Giraffe might turn out to be one of those quack-doctors who only deceive people and injure their constitutions by the pretended remedies which they sell, yet she could do no less than accept the gift so freely offered, and promised the good Horse that she would certainly try it.

The same evening, therefore, she got Jessie, the Donkey, to rub a little of the ointment upon her stump, and repeated the operation three times a week, according to the directions on the ointment pot.

Extraordinary to relate, at the end of the first week a change really appeared in the stump. Hair came upon it, and Jessie said she could almost fancy that it was a trifle longer. A fortnight passed, and doubt changed to certainty. Yes! the Cow's tail was undoubtedly growing!

In her delight, the honest creature was for hurrying off to show the Farrier, but gave up the idea at the advice of the Donkey, who reminded her that, as a regular doctor, he was quite certain to be jealous of the Giraffe as a mere quack, and that mischief might possibly follow. Besides, she was going on well, and had better let well alone.

Accordingly, our Cow stayed quietly at home, and continued to use the ointment until the pot was empty. It had, however, lasted her for two months.

at the end of which time her tail had grown to more than half its original length ; and, having got a start, I am glad to say that it persevered in growing, until, in another couple of months' time, she had as good and serviceable a tail as any of her neighbours !

Her past sorrows were now all forgotten. Kind words and congratulations were poured in upon her from every quarter. Her master wondered at the change for the better in her appearance, and the dairymaid was delighted at the good fortune which had befallen her favourite Cow. She herself was most thankful for the blessing which she now enjoyed, and always felt that it was owing to the patience with which she had borne her troubles, and the kindness which she had shown to all around her—which is a thing that, as in this very case, always brings its own reward.

So she lived on, a happy, prosperous, and contented Cow all the days of her life. And what do you think the Farrier said when he came to hear of it ? Why, he declared that the Giraffe's ointment was all nonsense—it was his own dressing of the stump once which had wrought the cure, and that those quacks were always trying to claim credit for cures which the regular doctors had really made. But if the Farrier knew he could make the Cow's tail grow all right again, why did he bother her at first with all those false tails ? So I don't believe his story one bit ; but, anyhow, I am very glad that our old friend has once more a real tail.

THE TWO HALL-SERVANTS.

"I MUST confess that I think but little of you," said a spruce Silk Umbrella to an Oak Walking-stick in the hall of a house in Grosvenor Square. "You make no attempt to keep the rain off from your master, and you walk about without any covering in the most barefaced manner possible."

"Perhaps, however," rejoined the Walking-stick, "I am as good a man as my neighbours, after all. I am taken out on the bright, sunshiny days, when the world is pleasant to see, whereas *you* are kept for the cloudy, rainy, disagreeable days, when no well-bred walking-stick would care to be seen outside the door. Moreover, what *are* you but a plain stick, cut from nobody knows where? I, on the contrary, come of a noble and ancient race; my father was an oak of considerable influence in his forest, and respected by all the saplings who knew him; and several of my relatives have gold heads and move in the most fashionable circles. And as to being barefaced, the fact is that I am an open-hearted and handsome fellow, who is not ashamed to be seen, whilst *you*

have evidently some deformity which you seek to hide from the world under your covering."

This speech naturally irritated the Umbrella. "Waterproof my silk if I put up with this language!" said he; "you, who haven't a coat to your back, presume to blame me because I wear the garment which decency and a due regard for my position in society alike compel me to put on! And as to your 'ancient race,' I would have you know that I come of a good old walnut family, as hard and as handsome as any oak that ever came from an acorn!"

"May I be gold-headed if I care!" replied the Walking-stick; "but instead of disputing about our ancestry, why not take advantage of our master's being out of town, and go out for a pleasant walk together? If rain comes on, you can open yourself over us and we shall both be kept dry, and if any one pushes against you and soils your silk, they shall soon feel me against their backs."

The Umbrella, who was by no means an ill-natured creature, willingly agreed to this proposal, and they both sallied forth out of the street door, although the Door-mat protested against their going off without her, and declared it was very hard that she should always be left at home, and in fact only knew that there was any outside world at all from the mud which people who went out rudely and without ceremony brushed off upon her on their return.

Out of the porch and down the steps went the two friends, and marched along the streets in fine style.

Presently they met a Broom, who, whilst his master the crossing-sweeper had gone to his dinner, was taking a quiet stroll on his own account. As they were about to pass him, the careless fellow, either by accident or design, brushed up against the Umbrella, and having no little street mud upon him, which he had gathered in his vocation, left visible marks upon the silk of which the Umbrella was so proud.

"Now, by my handle!" said the latter, "things are coming to a pretty pass in England. Cannot two gentlemen walk quietly along the pavement in their own square, without being run against by a dirty Broom?"

"Dirty, indeed!" quoth the angry Broom; "keep a civil tongue in your head! You silky fool, do you think the streets were made for you alone? Really, the conceit of these hall-servants is becoming ridiculous!" And the Broom leaned against an area railing and laughed scornfully.

"What do you mean by hall-servants?" angrily exclaimed the Oak Walking-stick. "It is rather too bad that a contemptible scrub like you, who are never admitted into decent society, should be allowed to insult respectable persons because they happen to live in a hall of their own, with stove, porter's chair, door-mat, and all complete! Learn, sir, to reverence your betters!"

"Betters be chopped up for faggot-wood!" sneered the Broom in return. "You are only a common stick, and that fellow with you is as bad as you. Both of

you dare not say your lives are your own when your master is at home, and have to dance attendance upon him, and wait till he chooses to take you out. I, on the contrary, am out in all weathers, and consequently see something of the world."

"Not so much as *I* do, though," said a Lamp-post hard by, suddenly joining in the conversation, "for I live out of doors altogether, and, from my height and other natural advantages, have great opportunities of acquiring knowledge as to what goes on. My own private opinion is that you three fellows had all far better be attending to your several duties, instead of loitering about the streets and abusing each other. I can't think what the police can be about to allow it!"

This speech at once turned all three against the Lamp-post, and they began to give it him pretty hot and strong.

"Arrogant upstart!" said the Walking-stick, "do you think yourself so grand, because you happen to be a head and shoulders taller than anybody else? I would have you to know that you are as ugly an article as any in the street, and I've a great mind to smash your glass in for you."

"To hear him talk," added the Broom, "one would think he was really somebody, whereas we all know that it is only the gas which makes a man of him."

"And what is more," chimed in the Umbrella, "this is actually our servant who thus abuses us, for he is only put there that we may be able to see our way along the streets."

At this the Lamp-post became so enraged, that his lamp flared with passion. "Blow me out," he shouted, "if I stand this! By the lamp of Aladdin I will show you what it is to insult a public officer in the streets!" And he called loudly to a Pillar Letter-box, who was sauntering by, and whose general appearance betokened that he was a substantial householder, who might be relied upon to support the authorities.

"Arrest those knaves!" cried the Lamp-post; upon which the Pillar threw himself down and began to roll steadily towards them. However, at that moment a maid-servant came running up in a great hurry to put a letter into him; so he had to stand upright again as fast as possible, and look just as if nothing had happened; and meanwhile the Umbrella, Walking-stick, and Broom slipped round the corner, where the latter was collared in a moment by his master the crossing-sweeper. As he instantly began vigorously to sweep a very muddy crossing, the poor fellow could only cast a humbled and sheepish look upon the other two, who made off as fast as they could.

As they were running away, however, in a careless and hasty manner, an elderly Scraper, who stood near a neighbouring door, craftily tripped them up, and down they both came upon the pavement. You may well believe that their rage was great. The Umbrella had had his silk shockingly soiled, and had sprained his whalebone to boot, while the Walking-stick had scratched a quantity of the polish off his knees against a sharp stone. They turned furiously

upon the Scraper ; but he was so used to be kicked and stamped on, that he didn't care twopence for anything they could do to him, and told them so plainly to their faces ; adding, that the only fun he had was to trip up passers-by when he got the chance, for it was a dull life enough, standing out thus continually in all weathers, and having the mud off people's boots daily scraped upon him. So they could make nothing out of *him*, and it was no use getting in a passion.

Their appearance was now by no means what it had been when they first came out, and they began to be alarmed at the possible consequences if their master should come home and find them in such a different state from that in which he had left them. However, they plucked up courage, and taking the first Wheelbarrow they came to, persuaded it to drive them to the nearest pump, where the Stick got himself well washed, and the Umbrella sponged out his principal mud-spots.

Not yet, however, were their misfortunes over. Large drops of rain began to fall ; so, according to agreement, the Umbrella opened himself, so that both might be protected. He did this with some difficulty, however, owing to his sprained whalebone ; and hardly had he accomplished the feat when, a gust of wind sending him off his balance, he went bang up against a Milkcan which a milkwoman had just left on the pavement whilst she went down the area. The Can reeled, but recovered itself, though some of

the milk was spilt, and rain ran down the Umbrella for vexation at his own awkwardness.

"No use crying over spilt milk," said the Oak Walking-stick; but the Can was not to be put off with a feeble joke.

"Rascal," it said, addressing the Umbrella, as he leant against its side, panting for breath, "this insult was intended! You are a rude fellow, and I believe are merely a cotton Umbrella, and no gentleman, or you would not first nearly knock me down and then drop your rain into me, as you are now doing. It is most unpleasant, as well as quite unnecessary, for my mistress has just taken me to the pump, and I have water enough already."

"I really didn't mean it," replied the Umbrella, who was sorry for the mischief he had done; "but the wind drove me against you. As to being cotton, that is a foolish remark, and only proves that you are all spout and lid, with no eyes. Keep your lid shut, and my rain won't hurt you; and as to being watered already, I wonder you are not ashamed to expose your shortcomings in public. Fie upon you!"

At this moment up came the milkwoman; so the Can had immediately to drop the conversation, which was picked up by a passing Sparrow, and I don't know what became of it. The Umbrella and Walking-stick jogged quietly on until they came to a public-house, where they thought they might get rest and refreshment, as the Umbrella had a slight acquaintance with a stand in the doorway, where his

master's servant had occasionally put him during his visit to the publican. The stand, however, was nearly full of other umbrellas, most of them dripping with rain in the most vulgar manner, and none of them silk ; so the two friends were about to retreat, when a Beer-jug, much the worse for the liquor with which he had been filled all day, stumbled up against them, stained the silk of the Umbrella with porter, and accused them of a design to steal the latch-key. In vain they remonstrated with him ; he would take no denial : so at last they boldly overset him, and scuttled off as fast as they could. Looking back, however, they were much alarmed to see three Pewter Pots in hot pursuit ; for, having been waiting to receive the contents of the jug, they were much disappointed at seeing them wasted on the floor, and vowed to capture the offenders. " Stop thief !" they loudly shouted, and a Mug, who was returning home after a visit to a neighbouring Tea-cup, endeavoured to obey the command. A smart blow, however, from the Walking-stick broke him in two, and there he lay with his white body and gold rim, and " A present from Margate " written outside him, half on one side of the pavement and half on the other. As this delayed the Pewter Pots, who naturally stopped when they came up to the dying Mug, the two companions were able to get safely round the corner, and then they ran without stopping till they came to the porch of their own house. What was their surprise and terror to see their master just opening the door and walking

in! He had unexpectedly returned to town, and had come straight from the railway station. With great presence of mind the two truants slipped in behind the master, and, as he turned to shut the door, clattered down into their stand as fast as possible. The master heard the clatter, but supposed it had been made by the jar of the door shutting. He merely turned his head towards the stand, and seeing the soiled silk of the Umbrella, remarked to himself—

“I see the servants have been using my Umbrella again; it is really too bad!” and walked quietly on to his study.

“Well,” remarked the Door-mat, “the luck which some people have is really extraordinary! That is probably all that will be said to you two, who have been out larking about town and enjoying yourselves all day. I, on the contrary, who have remained here steadily on duty all the time, get no praise, and in fact no notice at all. The master quietly stamps on me as he walks in, and passes on without a word. But in this world the friends who are best and truest are often despised and trampled upon, and I must bear my lot with the rest.”

The Umbrella and the Walking-stick made no reply, but thought that, whatever might be the merits of the Door-mat, they themselves were well out of an awkward scrape!

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